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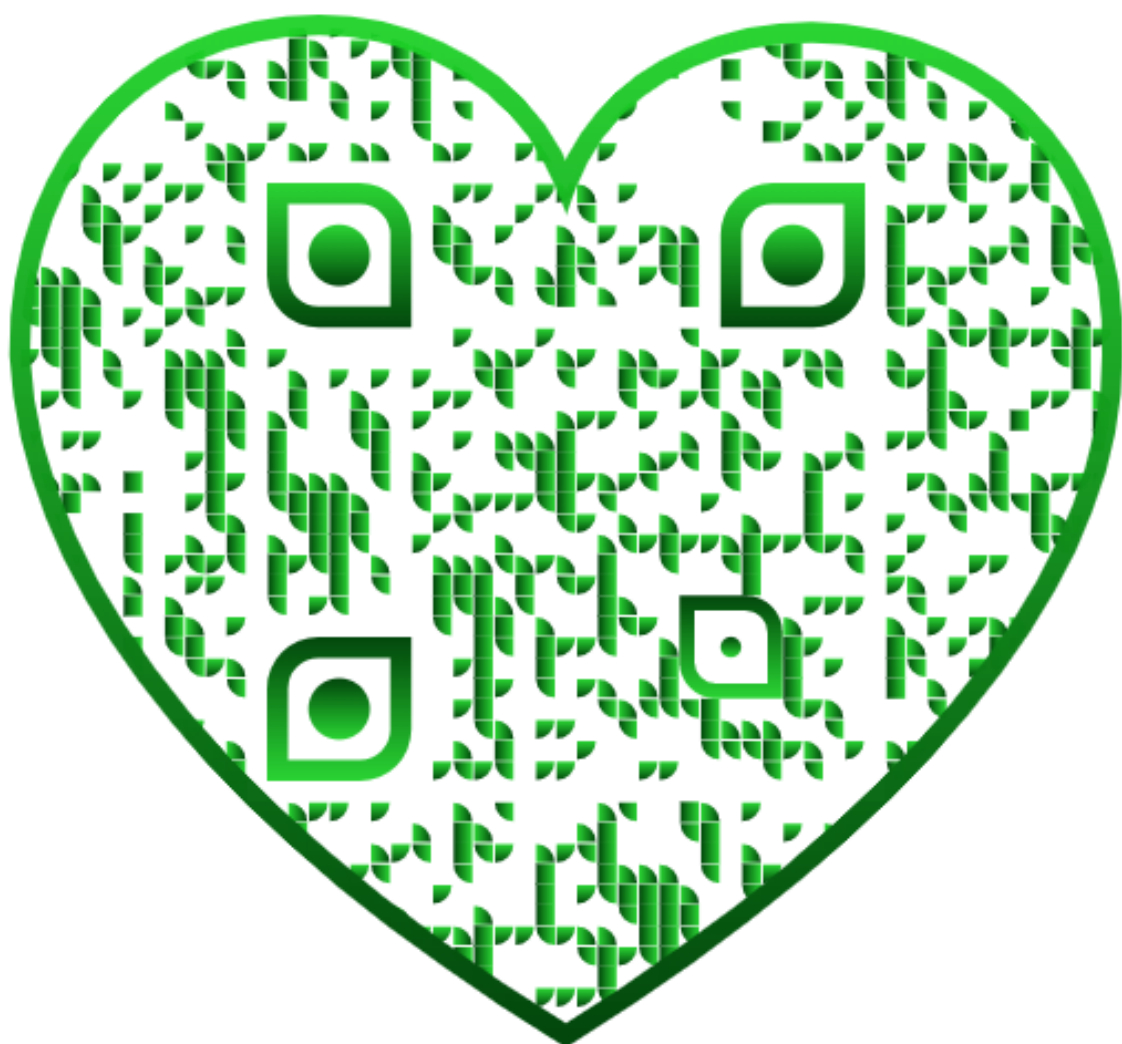
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT THE HISTORIC FIDE
GRAND SWISS 2025:

POETRY AND DRAMA IN SAMARKAND

GIRI, BLUEBAUM,
VAISHALI AND LAGNO
SEIZE THE CANDIDATES SPOTS
IN A TOURNAMENT OF SHOCKS,
RESILIENCE, AND HISTORIC FIRSTS



BCM INTERVIEW: GM KEITH ARKELL GEARING UP FOR THE 65+ CHALLENGE





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BCM Interview with Chess Legend, GM Keith Arkell

I'M GEARING UP FOR AN ASSAULT ON THE 65+ TITLES

By IM Angus Dunnington
Images: Courtesy of Keith Arkell

When Keith Arkell swept to victory at the 2014 European Senior Championship, he launched what would become one of the most dominant runs in senior chess history. Eleven years on, the 64-year-old Grandmaster boasts an impressive list of successes in senior events, but is determined to achieve more. In an interview for BCM, Keith Arkell openly talks about his senior chess career, his triumphs and disappointments.

In 2014, Keith Arkell was handed a gift: FIDE lowered the age for senior chess to 50+ and, at 53, he jumped straight in.

It's been a tremendously successful 11 years, during which time Keith has put together a list of accolades that cements his place at the top - he's been a European champion, tied for a World title, carried England to multiple medals in team competitions and, on the domestic front, won the British Senior Championship three years running. Add to the list of major titles and medals the numerous senior tournament victories he's racked up, and it's been a Herculean achievement.

With that in mind, you'd be forgiven for thinking he might be considering slowing down, donning the proverbial slippers in front of a cosy fire and daydreaming about his legendary rook endings. But you couldn't be more wrong. Indeed, at 64, the indefatigable GM is gearing up for what promises to be an interesting Phase 2 of his already glittering senior career: the fresh and welcoming waters of "senior senior" chess, a potentially rewarding new world open only to those aged 65 and over.

With this new era about to begin for the extremely popular GM, in this interview with BCM, Keith looks back at a decade where the chess board brought him some of his greatest moments.

BRITISH CHESS MAGAZINE: YOUR 2014 EUROPEAN SENIOR (50+) CHAMPIONSHIP VICTORY WAS A LANDMARK - THE FIRST OVER-THE-BOARD EUROPEAN ADULT TITLE FOR A BRIT. HOW DID IT COME ABOUT?

KEITH ARKELL: When FIDE changed the senior categories to 65+ and 50+, I suddenly qualified at 53. I had always looked forward to 60+ chess, but this gave me a chance seven years earlier than expected. I appealed for sponsorship on the English Chess Forum and was touched to raise about £1,500, kick-started by



Sean Hewitt. That support allowed me to compete in – and win – the European Senior title, ahead of strong players like GM Zurab Sturua.

BCM: JUST MONTHS LATER, YOU TIED FOR FIRST IN THE WORLD SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP. WHAT STANDS OUT FROM THAT EVENT?

KA: I scored 8.5/11, tying with Sturua, against what I think was the strongest field ever encountered in that event. I faced six GMs, drew with John Nunn (who came third) and Sturua, and won nice endgames against Mark Hebden and Klaus Bischoff. I even swindled the legendary Evgeny Sveshnikov. Unfortunately, the Buchholz tiebreak denied me the title: my fate was sealed when the Russian IM I had beaten



lost to the Italian IM Sturua had defeated. Agonisingly, it was the last game to finish in the whole building!

BCM: WE TEND TO CONSIDER CHESS PLAYERS TO HAVE THEIR BEST YEARS IN THEIR 20S OR 30S, BUT WOULD YOU SAY THIS PERIOD SAW THE PEAK OF YOUR PLAYING STRENGTH?

KA: Yes. Between the autumn of 2014 and the summer of 2015, I made completely correct GM norms in four strong tournaments in a row - the Isle of Man, the World Senior, Hastings 2014/15 and Vienna. They were "superfluous" as I was already a GM, but looking back, my mid-50s were my absolute peak. It's funny, as most people do indeed imagine peaking in

your 20s, and not when you're fumbling for your reading glasses.

BCM: YOU'VE ALSO BEEN A KEY MEMBER OF ENGLAND'S SENIOR TEAMS. HOW DO YOU VIEW YOUR CONTRIBUTION OVER THE LAST DECADE?

KA: I've been fortunate to be part of all the successful squads. Over ten years, we won gold, as well as numerous silvers and bronzes at the World Senior Team Championship. We also won the European Team Championship every time we entered. My individual board gold and silver medals were prolific in both competitions.

BCM: YET, IN 2025 YOU WEREN'T SELECTED FOR THE WORLD SENIOR TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP, A DECISION WHICH SHOCKED MANY. WHAT HAPPENED?

KA: Simply put, merit and transparency were missing. On results, Michael Adams, Stuart Conquest and I should have been automatic choices. Months earlier, Stu and I had carried the team to the Euro title with big scores. I scored 6/7 on boards 2 and 3 for a 2542 performance, and Stu scored 6.5/8 on board 4 for a 2478 performance. That's +10 between us, while the remaining three players managed a combined +2. Soon after that, but still three months before selections were announced, I added a World Senior Team Championship silver medal to my collection.

Furthermore, I was already the two-time British Senior Champion - which, incidentally, I would convert into a hat-trick the following year. And finally, any criteria involving ratings would also have comfortably led to my selection, instead and rather perplexingly, a player was recruited who, for 29 consecutive FIDE lists, was rated lower than me! This muddled process left me out - and England finished outside the medals. The selectors, I understand, got

so tangled up in trying to accommodate the personal demands of a particular player that I was sacrificed.

The hardest part was the lack of full transparency. Much of the selection, it seems, had taken place behind closed doors months before the October date I was given.

BCM: HOW DID YOU RESPOND?

KA: I resigned as the selector and then went public in order to highlight what I saw as - at best - a deeply flawed process.

I had hoped for constructive dialogue, but the management showed no interest. Instead, defamatory statements appeared

THE CURIOUS CHESS WORLD OF KEITH ARKELL

- One of only seven competitors from the famous Hastings Round-Robins to have remained undefeated. The other 6 are Petrosian, Tal, Reshevsky, Fine, Kostic and Spassky.
- Has claimed 25 1st places (in 27 attempts) at the DCCA Congress ('Paignton') as a world record in International Opens. Nobody has challenged this.
- Won R+B v R 27 times/27 in rated games.
- Played an illegal game vs reigning US Champion Michael Wilder after we moved the board away from the sunlight. We accidentally replaced a pawn which had moved to h3 back on h2. Wilder then proceeded to play g3, Bh3, Bxe6. Many hours later, bulletin editor Byron Jacobs adjusted the moves a little in order to legalise the game! We failed to notice this during the post-mortem.



In Sunway Stiges 2024 Keith Arkell held world legend Vasyl Ivanchuk to a draw - a result so dramatic it moved the Ukrainian to tears

on the ECF website, including one just before Christmas. Both were quickly taken down after I threatened legal action.

Many months later, when the whole fiasco was behind us, a solicitor and professional mediator kindly offered his services for free, but those in power declined this unless I capitulated first, which of course was unacceptable.

What kept me sane was the sheer volume of support - people from clubs up and down the country were on my side, with one friend saying he was a member of three different clubs where everyone he spoke with supported me.

Rather than pursuing legal action for defamation, or issuing a public statement, I would prefer to close the matter with this interview. It is time to move on, and I sincerely hope such a debacle is never repeated.

BCM: AFTER ALL OF THIS, WHAT STILL KEEPS YOU MOTIVATED IN SENIOR CHESS?

KA: At the end of the day, it always comes back to the board. The politics can be frustrating, but the game itself never disappoints. I still love the grind of

an endgame, the satisfaction of finding precise moves under pressure, and the camaraderie of fellow players. Senior chess gives me the chance to test myself against historically strong opponents while also enjoying the social side. More specifically, I'm gearing up for an assault on the European and World Senior titles next year.

BCM: ARE YOU DOING ANYTHING TO PREPARE FOR THOSE CHAMPIONSHIPS?

KA: Just as with the run-up to the 50+ versions, my motivation is rising as the year approaches. I've deliberately kept even more active than usual. Playing in the strongest events isn't necessary - it's more important to stay in the winning habit. So far this year I've won 16 FIDE events.

BCM: WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU GIVE TO THOSE CONSIDERING PLAYING IN SENIOR TOURNAMENTS FOR THE FIRST TIME? DOES IT REQUIRE A DIFFERENT APPROACH?

KA: Senior players often rely on pattern recognition, while their calculation ability declines. My advice: learn some offbeat openings where the patterns are unusual, and practice them a lot. You can play hundreds of quick games online to embed those ideas.

BCM: GIVEN THAT THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF PLAYING CHESS IS PROBABLY MORE IMPORTANT FOR SENIOR PLAYERS, WHICH TOURNAMENTS WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?

KA: For my personal ambition, I'll always target World and European Championships. But for a great all-round experience, Marienbad is an excellent choice for its cultural tradition, its springs, and the general ambience. I'm not alone in this recommendation - at the January 2025 event, the Senior section attracted as many entrants as the Open, GM and two IM tournaments combined! This,



incidentally, is indicative of the increasing popularity of senior chess.

I also enjoyed senior events at Dublin, Teplice, and Bad Bertrich. Each has its own charm.

BCM: RATING DEFLATION AMONG YOUNG PLAYERS IS A BIG ISSUE, BUT ISN'T THERE ALSO A 'GREY' PROBLEM, WITH OLDER PLAYERS BEING UNDERRATED?

KA: Yes, the damage is already done. The key factor now isn't age, but activity. If you're active and not a rapidly improving junior, your rating has probably been clobbered by 100 points - sometimes even 200 and more. Objectively, I don't think I'm much weaker than when I played at my peak, a decade ago, but because I'm active and play in many open tournaments, my rating has suffered.

These events are riddled with juniors rated, say, 1870 FIDE but already near 2200 ECF. The rule of thumb is: if you want to know their real strength, look at their ECF/national rating, not their FIDE rating.

I've been warning about deflation for 13 years, back when most people insisted inflation was the problem. Today, the task of reaching 2500 is as difficult as it once was to achieve 2600. For this reason, I have great respect for the young English IMs chasing 2500 and GM norms. At least they have senior chess to look forward to...



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THE 2025 FIDE GRAND SWISS TOURNAMENT REPORT



FOUR PATHS TO GLORY: Giri's sole triumph, Bluebaum's German breakthrough, Vaishali's historic repeat, and Lagno's undefeated march define an unforgettable Grand Swiss

By Milan Dinic

Photo: Michal Walusza / FIDE Official

The ancient Silk Road city of Samarkand witnessed chess history unfold over two dramatic weeks in September 2025, as the fourth edition of the FIDE Grand Swiss delivered the most unpredictable qualifying tournament in recent memory.

With 116 players in the Open and 56 taking part in the Women's event competing for just four precious Candidates spots, the tournament will be remembered for its fighting spirit, excitement, and uncertainty until the very end, where youth challenged experience and where

favourites faltered. The FIDE Grand Swiss is one of the most significant tournaments in the World Chess Championship cycle, featuring many of the world's strongest chess players. Launched in 2019 (with the women's event starting in 2021), the 11-round Swiss system tournament is held every two years. Considered as one of the most difficult and unpredictable chess events given its open nature, the top two finishers in both categories qualify directly for the World Candidates tournament, where a challenger for the title of world champion is chosen.



The 2025 edition ran from 4th to 15th September at the EXPO Centre in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The total prize fund for the event was \$855,000 - \$625,000 for the Open and \$230,000 for the Women's event.

THE SCENE

This is not the first major chess event taking place in Samarkand's in the Silk Road EXPO. In 2023, the FIDE World Rapid and Blitz was held at exactly the same place. Located in the Konigil massif beside the rowing canal, the area is made up of a large complex featuring the EXPO building alongside hotels situated around the canal. It almost feels like an Olympic village, relatively isolated from the rest of Samarkand.

September is still a warm month in Samarkand and the temperatures during the tournament were around 30 degrees Celsius. This factor influenced FIDE's decision to allow a more relaxed dress code for the players - crucially allowing "classic jeans" and plain trainers to be worn.

As was the case in 2023, the players were given treatment akin to other major sports - with coaches taking them from the airport to their hotels under police escort, huge media coverage in the country, Central Asia and beyond, and a lot of public interest which is not often seen in chess events nowadays.

The players have also warmed up to this kind of treatment and - until the final rounds where their nerves were tested to the limit - reciprocated by being friendly with the crowds and the media, taking pictures and giving autographs.

The whole setup of the event was also a test for Uzbekistan, which will in 2026 host the 46th Chess Olympiad at the same venue in Samarkand

The whole setup of the event was also a test for Uzbekistan, which will in 2026 host the 46th Chess Olympiad at the same venue in Samarkand. Uzbekistan has high hopes of winning that event. As Alisher Sadullaev, the First Vice-President of Uzbekistan Chess Federation, noted - the whole Uzbekistan chess team and staff, were stationed in Samarkand ahead of the event, preparing for the Grand Swiss.

"The whole Uzbek chess team that will be representing our country in the next Olympiad is in Samarkand and preparing. And this event will play a crucial role in getting them ready for the huge role next year they are about to play [at the Olympiad] and we expect them to win", Sadullaev said.

In recent years, the country has invested not just in chess - becoming one of the superpowers in the game - but also in other sports. During the Grand Swiss opening press conference, Adham Ikramov, Minister of Youth Policy and Sports of Uzbekistan, mentioned that the country has recently hosted several international sports events and that it enjoys the support of the international sporting organisations thanks to the high quality and standard of the organisation it is providing.

WHAT THE CHESS WORLD SAW IN SAMARKAND:

The Grand Swiss employed one of classical chess's most generous time controls: 90 minutes for 40 moves, plus 30 minutes, plus 15 minutes at move 60, with a 30-second increment throughout.

GIRI'S MOMENT

Anish Giri emerged as the sole victor in the Open tournament of the Grand Swiss, securing eight points after 11 rounds, securing his third qualification to the Candidates tournament.

Although just 31, Giri is no longer a young player in terms of modern chess standards. Yet, his spectacular result in Samarkand, in an unforgiving format where consistency is essential, shows that he is still in great form and has the right mental grit.

Giri's path to victory started slowly. After defeating Armenia's Robert Hovhannisyan, he made three consecutive draws (with Salih, Svane and Cheparinov). In round five, he defeated Grigoriy Oparin in a game which saw a lot of positional shuffling in which Giri was more precise and eked out victory.

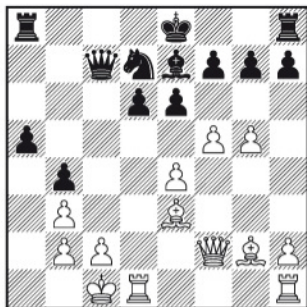
Then, in round six, Giri's true form came to the fore.

He defeated Marc'Andria Maurizzi in what was almost a miniature, lasting just 27 moves. Playing the Najdorf, Giri took the initiative on the queenside, making a rapid pawn advance.

Marc'Andria Maurizzi – Anish Giri

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand, Uzbekistan (6)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♗b3 e6 7.♗e3 ♗c6 8.g4 b5 9.g5 b4 10.♗a4 ♗d7 11.♖e2 ♖e7 12.0-0 ♗b7 13.f4 ♗a7 14.♗g2 ♗c6 15.♖f2 ♗xa4 16.♗xa7 ♗xb3 17.axb3 ♖c7 18.♗e3 a5 19.f5



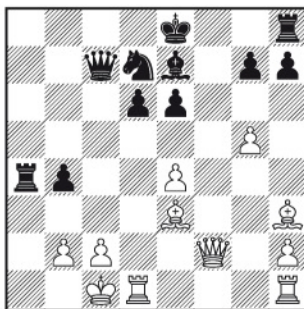
White just played 19.f5, trying to counter Black's advance on the queenside.



The two champions together:
Giri and Vaishali

19...a4! But after this move, Giri's attack unfolds much faster.

20.fxe6 fxe6 21.bxa4 ♖xa4 22.♗h3



Attacking the e6-pawn, but completely ignoring Black's main threat.

22...b3! Now White's king is under fire and Black is winning.

23.c3 ♗c5 24.♖e2 ♖c6 25.♗d2 0-0 [Black moves his king to safety.

26.♖hf1 ♖xf1 27.♖xf1 ♖xe4 White is only a pawn down, but his king is exposed and pieces in the way that there is no good move left to play. Faced with this, Maurizzi chose to resign.

0-1



This victory propelled Giri to the top group after six rounds, half a point behind the then leader Parham Maghsoodloo.

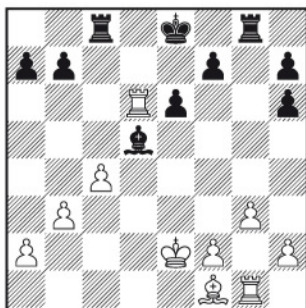
Round seven followed with a relatively uneventful draw with Abhimanyu Mishra, ending in an even rook endgame. But in the final quarter, Giri picked up speed.

Despite finishing in a draw, the round eight game between Parham Maghsoodloo and Anish Giri saw intense action on the board.

Parham Maghsoodloo – Anish Giri

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand, Uzbekistan (8)

This was the position reached by move 21, in the English Opening:

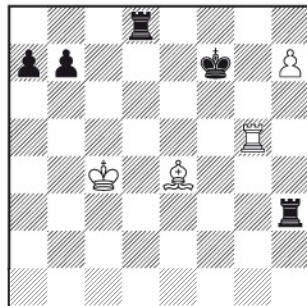


Black had just placed his bishop on d5, effectively taking the white rook on d6 captive.

22. ♖h3 ♜c7 23. cxd5 ♖e7 24. dxe6 ♖xd6 Black emerged an exchange up, but it's not so easy to convert, as White's bishop had a lot of open space and his rook is also very active. Now, a series of positional manoeuvres followed by both sides.

25. ♖d1+ ♖e7 26. exf7 ♖xf7 27. ♔f5 ♜e8+ 28. ♖f3 ♖f6 29. ♔e4 ♜e7 30. ♖d5 ♜ed7 31. ♖h5 ♖g7 32. g4 ♖d2 33. g5 ♖f7+ 34. ♖e3 ♖fxf2 35. gxh6+ ♖f6 36. h3 ♖xa2 37. ♔xh7 ♖ae2+ 38. ♖d4 ♖f4+ 39. ♖d5 ♜e8 40. ♔b1 ♖d8+ 41. ♖c5 ♖f1 42. ♔e4 ♖c1+ 43. ♖b5

♜c7 44. ♖f5+ ♖e6 45. ♖h5 ♖f7 46. ♖g5 ♜c3 47. h7 ♖xb3+ 48. ♖c4 ♖xh3



White is one step away from promoting a pawn.

49. ♖g8! If **49... ♖xg8** then **50. ♔d5+** followed by the queen promotion after **hxg8**.

49... ♖f8 50. ♔g6+ ♖e7 51. ♔d5 ♖f6 And now everything simplifies into a clean draw.

52. h8 ♖ ♖xh8 53. ♖xh8 ♖xg6 54. ♖h7+ ♖d8 55. ♖xb7

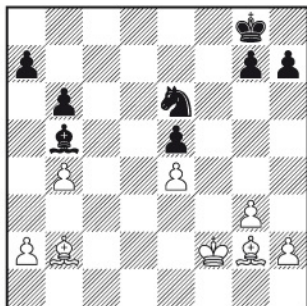
1/2-1/2

In round nine, Giri defeated Jorden van Foreest in the Queen's Gambit Declined. Playing as Black, van Foreest held until the endgame, where he cracked under pressure and lost.

Giri: "If you're a player like me, not really good, then I need to believe in miracles! People can become world champion, Gukesh became world champion, and you see sometimes he has bad tournaments like here."

Anish Giri - Jorden Van ForeestFIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand,
Uzbekistan (9)

This was the position after 30 moves.

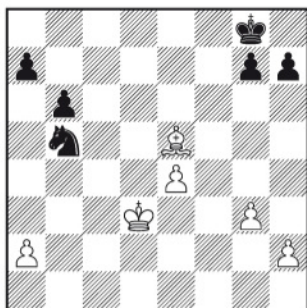


It's even. Here Black chose the right way to proceed, but then blundered.

30...♖d4 31.♗f1 ♗xf1 32.♔xf1 ♜c2??
This move lost the game for van Foreest.

The best option here for Black was to continue with: 32...♖f3 and after 33.♕g2 ♜e1+ 34.♕h3 ♜c2 35.b5 ♖f7 and the black king is joining the defence, cementing the position.

33.b5 ♜e3+ 34.♔e2 ♜c4 35.♗c3 ♜a3
36.♗xe5 ♜xb5 37.♔d3



White's bishop and active king in the centre hold everything and limit the space for the b5 knight which is, effectively, trapped. Black continued to resist but could not escape defeat.

37...a6 38.♗d4 ♔f7 39.♗xb6 ♔e6 40.a4
♜d6 41.♗d4 ♜f7 42.♗c7 h5 43.h4 ♗d7
44.♗e5 g5 45.♗d5 gxh4 46.gxh4 ♜d8
47.♗c5 ♜c6 48.♗f4 ♜a5 49.♗b6 ♜c4+
50.♗xa6 ♗c6 51.e5 ♜b6 52.♗a5 ♜d5
53.♗g5

1-0

With this victory, Giri finally reached the top - sharing first place with three other players (Bluebaum, Firouzja and Keymer), on 6.5/9.

Always lucid in his comments, Giri had this to say after defeating van Foreest: "If you're a player like me, not really good, then I need to believe in miracles! People can become world champion, Gukesh became world champion, and you see sometimes he has bad tournaments like here".

"I also sometimes have bad tournaments, so why can't I become world champion? I'm praying, hoping to get lucky, doing my best," Giri said in an interview to Rachel Burak.

And praying, it seems, helped.

In round 10 Giri was playing as Black against Alireza Firouzja. As expected - both players chose a sit-and-wait approach, drawing quickly, in just 18 moves.

Alireza Firouzja - Anish GiriFIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand,
Uzbekistan (10)

1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 ♜c6 3.♗b5 ♜d4 4.♖f3 e6
5.0-0 ♜xb5 6.♜xb5 a6 7.♜a3 ♜f6 8.e5
♜d5 9.d4 cxd4 10.♗xd4 b6 11.♗e4 ♗b7
12.c4 ♜c3 13.♗xb7 ♜b8 14.♗xa6 ♜a8
15.♗b7 ♜b8 16.♗a6 ♜a8 17.♗b7 ♜b8
18.♗a6 ♜a8

½-½



The game that decided the winner in the Open: Giri vs Niemann in round 11

In the final round, playing on board two, Giri was leading the white pieces against Hans Niemann who had an excellent run in Samarkand. The American - who had a tournament performance of 2765 - had four victories and six draws after the first 10 rounds. As both were on 7/10, both had to win to secure a spot in the Candidates. This secured that the game will be sharp and fighting.

Anish Giri - Hans Moke Niemann

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand,
Uzbekistan (11)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 ♖b4 5.♖c2 ♖xc3! A theoretical line allowing Black to equalise. The alternative for black was to castle.

6.♖xc3 ♖e7 Defends the e-pawn in preparation of the d5-strike in the centre.

7.a3 One of the most popular moves in the line, favoured by top players. Other options include 7.d4; and 7.♖e2.

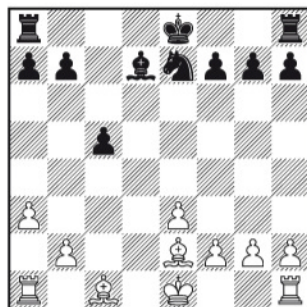
7...d5 8.d4 exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘xd4 The best move in this position. If 9...♘e5,

White would have had greater chances to achieve an advantage with 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♖b3.

10.♖xd4 c5 11.♖h4 ♖e6 This leads to a comfortable endgame for White. 11...dxc4 was a better option. Another alternative is 11...g5.

12.cxd5 ♘xd5 13.♖b5+ ♖d7 14.♖xe7+ ♘xe7 14...♖xe7 was more accurate, according to the engines, but without much change either way.

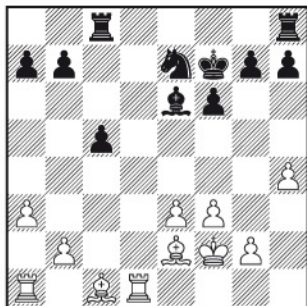
15.♖e2



"Being in a must-win for him it's a very sad position," said Giri in the post-game interview, when showing this position.

15...♖c8 16.f3 White now has a comfortable, long-term initiative with a pair of bishops and with minimal risk for his king. From this point on, it was clearly a game where White could win or Black could draw.

16...f6 17.♔f2 ♔f7 18.♞d1 ♕e6 19.h4



The now well-known pawn side-push, popularised by computers. In reality, White is now trying to open another weakness for Black, on the kingside. Despite this, playing 19.e4 was more precise, pre-empting the incursion on d4 by the black knight.

19...b6 20.e4 ♘c6 21.♕e3 ♘a5?! It's rarely if ever good to place your knight on the rim.

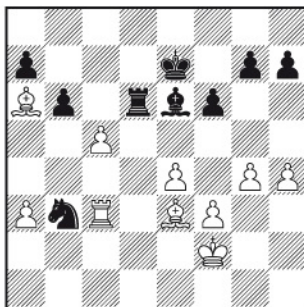
22.♞d6?! 22.♞ac1 was better - getting the second rook into the game.

22...♞he8 23.g4 ♘b7 24.♞d2 ♘a5 25.♞d6 ♘b7 26.♞dd1 ♘a5 27.♞ac1! ♔e7? Allowing White to push his b-pawn.

28.♕a6 ♞cd8 29.♞xd8 ♞xd8 30.b4! And now it's here.

30...♘b3 31.♞c3 By this point, White is on the verge of victory.

31...♞d6 32.bxc5



32...bxc5?! 32...♘xc5 offered some chances for a long resistance.

Analysing this position in the FIDE tournament broadcast after the game, Giri said: "I had a difficult choice - I could just move the bishop or take [with the rook] on b3. My logic was that, if moving the bishop wins, it's OK. But if taking on b3 wins and I don't do it and don't qualify for the Candidates, I will never forgive myself. And that's why I took [the knight on b3, with the rook]".

33.♞xb3! ♕xb3 34.♕xc5 ♔d7 If 34...h6 then 35.♕c8!! and Black is in a pin.

35.♕xd6 ♔xd6 36.g5!! The move for victory, and Giri plays it. This bishop endgame with an extra pawn is winning for White and Giri sealed the deal nine moves later.

36...♕e6 37.♔e3 ♔c5 38.♔f4 ♔d4 39.gxf6 gxf6 40.a4! Advancing his pawns before improving the bishop.

40...h6 41.a5 ♕d7 42.♕e2 ♔c5 43.e5 ♔d5 44.exf6 ♔e6 45.f7 ♔xf7 46.♔e5

1-0

After four hours and fifteen minutes of play, Giri was the first to finish among the top boards and, with a victory, the first to qualify for the Candidates. This turned out



to be the only decisive game of the round among the top boards, which meant Giri was the sole winner, half a point ahead of the rest.

Apart from qualifying for the Candidates for the third time in his career, being the sole winner meant Giri also pocketed \$90,000.

THE POWER OF VISUALISATION

In his first reaction to the victory, speaking in FIDE's live broadcast, Giri said that the previous night he "visualised" a victory against Niemann: "There is this technique and... I saw myself win. Then I went a bit too far and started to think who will be in my team for the Candidates and I said I needed to stop at that point, as it was too far".

"I really love preparing for the Candidates," Giri also said. "I'm a little too old to enjoy playing the [FIDE] Circuit. But the Candidates will be the only thing for which I could gather resources, get out of the mundane and give it my best shot".

In an interview for the chess platform "Take Take Take" after the tournament, talking about his victory, Giri said it was "like a fairy tale".

"I was only one of the people. I was never a favourite, I was never leading, only sharing the lead with a bad tiebreak... I've been working towards that, I've been dreaming about it for so long, that to say that I'm shocked that it happened would be an overstatement, but I'm extremely happy about it!"

THE GERMAN CHESS MOMENT

It's been many years since Germany had a strong pool of chess players as it does today. Rasmus Svane, Vincent Keymer, Matthias Bluebaum, Alexander Donchenko are all part of this new wave. In Samarkand, we have seen Bluebaum and Keymer shine.

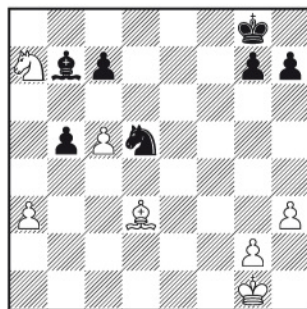
For the first time since Robert Huebner in 1991, Germany will have a player in the Candidates. That will be the 28-year-old Matthias Bluebaum who finished second in the Grand Swiss on tiebreaks, edging out Alireza Firouzja and Vincent Keymer. The two-time European champion had an excellent run in Samarkand.

Starting with two draws, Bluebaum continued with three consecutive victories. In round five, he defeated the tournament top seed player, R Praggnanandhaa in the Queen's Pawn Opening.

Playing as Black, the Indian found himself in a tense endgame and overlooked a pawn on the queenside which ended up costing him a point.

Matthias Bluebaum - R Praggnanandhaa

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand,
Uzbekistan (5)



36...c6? 36...d4 37.c6 dxc6 38.f1 d5 would have given Black more chances.

37.d4!

37...c3 38.dxc6 dxc6 39.dxc6 f7 40.d4 White is a pawn up and also has a pin on Black's runner on b5.

40...f6 41.c6 e7 42.f2 d6 43.f3 g6 44.h4 h6 45.g4 Playing on both flanks, exploiting Black's weaknesses.

45...♖d5 46.♗xb5+ ♔xc6 47.♗d4+ ♕c5 48.♗c2 ♕c4 49.♕f3 ♕b3 50.♗e3 ♗f6 51.♗g4 ♗g8 52.♕e4 ♕xa3 53.♕e5 h5 54.♕e6 hxg4 55.♕f7

1-0

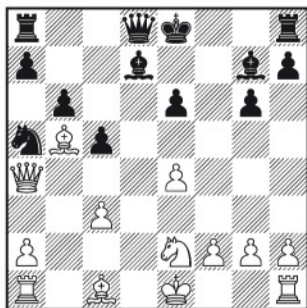
For the first time since Robert Huebner in 1991, Germany will have a player in the Candidates

In round six, playing on board two, Bluebaum was up against Abhimanyu Mishra, the youngest person ever to achieve the title of Grandmaster. The two drew in a sharp Grünfeld with both players making several temporary piece “offers” to one another, trying to provoke a blunder.

Matthias Bluebaum – Abhimanyu Mishra

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand,
Uzbekistan (6)

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4 c5 8.♗e2 ♗c6 9.d5 ♗a5 10.♗d3 e6 11.♗b5+ ♗d7 12.♖a4 b6 13.dxe6 fxe6



14.♗h6 Completely unexpected in this position. White gives up a bishop, but only for one move.

14...♗xh6 15.♖d1 Black's d7-bishop is falling.

15...0-0 16.♗xd7 ♖e7 17.0-0 ♖ad8 18.e5 ♗c4 Now Black offers a knight for free and White has no better option but to take it.

19.♖xc4 ♖xd7 Recapturing a light piece.

20.h4 ♗h8 21.g3 Black tempts White here.

21...♗d2 22.♗d4 Another “free” piece for Black.

22...cxd4 23.♖xd2 dxc3 24.♖xc3 ♖xd2 25.♖xd2 The position is even.

25...♖c5 26.♖d7 ♖xe5 27.♖xa7 ♖c5 28.♖d7 ♖d5 29.♖c7 ♖xa2 30.♖xb6 ♖e2

1/2-1/2

In round seven Bluebaum defeated Arjun Erigaisi, which allowed him to take the lead in the tournament.

Playing against the Catalan, Erigaisi made several unforced errors and was lost by move 27.

Arjun Erigaisi - Matthias Bluebaum

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand,
Uzbekistan (7)

1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2 ♗f6 4.d4 ♗e7 5.♗f3 0-0 6.0-0 dxc4 7.♖c2 c6 A less popular move. Usually Black plays here 7...a6.

8.♖xc4 b5 Black's idea is to play a6-♗b7-♗bd7 and c6-c5.

9.♖d3 9.♖c2 is played most often.

9...♗bd7 10.♗e3 Not the most natural place for a bishop, but does the job of preventing Black from playing c5.



10...♖d5 11.♗d2 A novelty. 11.♖c3 gives more options to White.

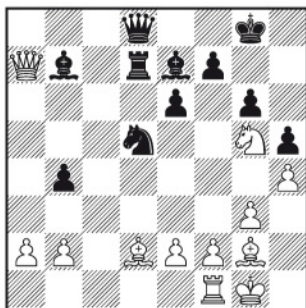
11...♗b7 12.♖c3 ♖b4 Forcing White's hand. 12...♗b6 is an alternative.

13.♖e4 13.♖xd5! was called for here.

13...♗b6 14.♗c2 c5! Things look much easier for Black after this.

15.♖fg5 ♖g6 16.dxc5 ♖xc5 17.♖xc5 ♗xc5 18.♗b3 ♖ac8 19.♖ac1?! ♗b5 20.♖xc8 ♖xc8 21.♗f3 ♗e8 22.♗e4 ♖c7 23.♗h4 h5 24.♗d4? ♗d8? 25.h4?! 25.♖e4 was a better choice for White - centralising the knight is always good.

25...♖d7 26.♗xa7?



A blunder, losing material. Black has a clear advantage after 26.♗c1 or 26.♗f4. Black's pieces are more active and he has potential discovered attacks along the d-file. Instead of moving his d2-bishop to safety with 26.♗f4 with a slightly inferior but defensible position, Erigaisi blundered with the next move.

26...♗a8! [The rook is attacking the queen, but the real target is the d2-bishop; wherever White puts his queen, she will be attacked in the next move by the d5-knight, opening the file for the rook to capture the bishop on d2.]

27.♖xe6 No better choice. White cannot prevent losing a piece.

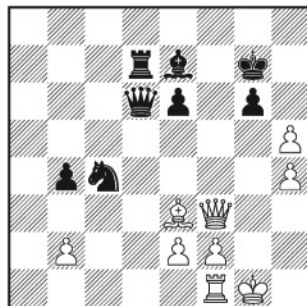
27.♗a6 ♖c7! followed by taking the b2-bishop;

27.♗a4 ♖b6.

27...fxe6 28.♗a4 ♖b6 29.♗c2 ♖f7 White has two pawns for a piece he gave up, but Black has a towering position.

30.♗h6 ♗xg2 31.♖xg2 ♗a8+ 32.♖g1 ♗xa2 Black lowers the pawn minus from two to one.

33.♗c6 ♗a5 34.♗g5 ♗c5 35.♗f3+ ♗f5 36.♗c6 ♗c5 37.♗f3+ ♖g7 38.♗e3 ♗d6 39.g4 ♖c4 40.gxh5



Now Black plays one of several moves leading to victory.

40...♖xe3 41.fxe3 ♗xh4 42.♖g2 ♗d5 43.e4 ♗xh5 44.♗f8+ ♖h7 45.♖f7+ ♖xf7 46.♗xf7+ ♖h6 47.♗f8+ ♖g5 48.♗c5+ ♖g4 49.♗e3 ♗e5 50.♗f3+ ♖g5 51.♖h3 ♗f4

0-1

Now as one of the leaders of the tournament, Bluebaum split a point with Nihal Sarin in round eight. Then, he faced Uzbekistan's biggest hope, Nodirbek Abdusattorov in round nine. A draw was agreed after 39 moves, as neither side gained an edge following the King's Pawn Opening.

The key moment for Bluebaum came in round 10, when he had a lucky escape against compatriot Vincent Keymer. Had he lost, Bluebaum would most likely have destroyed all hopes of reaching the Candidates.

Playing a rare line on the black side of the Reti, Bluebaum soon came under serious pressure. The endgame saw both sides go through ups and downs, but eventually Keymer achieved the decisive advantage, only to let it slip away with just one move.

Vincent Keymer – Matthias Bluebaum

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand, Uzbekistan (10)

1.♠f3 d5 2.g3 ♠f6 3.♠g2 e6 4.0-0 ♠e7 5.d3 0-0 6.♠c3 d4 7.♠e4 ♠xe4 8.dxe4 c5 9.e3 ♠c6 10.exd4 ♠xd4 11.♠d2 b6 12.e5 ♠a6 13.♠e1 ♠c8 14.c3 ♠c6 15.♠a4 ♠b7 16.♠g4 b5 17.a4 a6 18.♠f3 ♠h8 19.♠h5 ♠e8 20.axb5 axb5



One of White's pieces should jump to g5, but which one? Keymer made the wrong choice here.

21.♠g5 Instead - after 21.♠g5! ♠xg5 22.♠xg5 f5 23.♠xe8 ♠fxe8 24.♠e3 the resulting endgame is virtually winning for White. As played, Black avoided the worst.

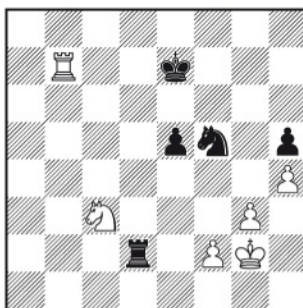
21...f6 22.♠xe8 ♠fxe8 23.exf6 gxf6 24.♠h6 ♠d8 25.♠a5 b4 26.c4 ♠f7 27.♠e3 ♠a8 28.♠xa8 ♠xa8 29.♠d2



Matthias Bluebaum signing a chess set for a young fan

♠xg2 30.♠xg2 ♠a2 31.♠e4 ♠xb2 32.♠a1 ♠g7 33.♠a7 ♠f8 34.♠xc5 ♠xc5 35.♠xc5 e5 36.♠e4 ♠g6 37.♠a6 ♠c2 38.♠xf6+ ♠g7 39.♠c6 b3 40.c5 b2 41.♠b6 ♠d8 42.♠d6 ♠e6 43.♠f5+ ♠f6 44.♠e3 ♠xc5 45.♠xb2 h5 46.♠b4 ♠d4 47.h4 ♠e6 48.♠b6+ ♠e7 49.♠f1 ♠f5 50.♠d2 ♠c2 51.♠e4 ♠e2 52.♠c3 ♠d2 53.♠b7+

The endgame saw both sides go through ups and downs, but eventually Keymer achieved the decisive advantage, only to let it slip away with just one move.



Instead of the solid 54.♠e4, Keymer went for the hasty 54.Rh???, missing an important tactical subtlety.

53...♠e6 54.♠h7 ♠xg3!! If 55.♠xg3 then 55...♠d3+.



55.♖h6+ ♜f7 56.♘b1 ♜b2 57.♝xg3
♞xb1 and now it's a draw.

58.♞xh5 ♜b3+ 59.♝g2 ♜b4 60.f3 ♝f6
61.♝g3 ♜b3 62.♞h6+ ♝f5 63.♞h5+ ♝f6

½-½

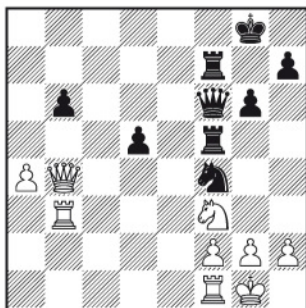
A lucky escape for Bluebaum, who entered the final day as one of the leaders.

In the last round, Bluebaum was facing Alireza Firouzja who had previously drawn with Giri. Both needed to win to qualify for the Candidate outright.

In the Dutch Defence, the two reached the following position.

Matthias Bluebaum - Alireza Firouzja

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand,
Uzbekistan (11)



Although the position is even, there is a lot of tension on the board with both sides making threats.

26...♞xg2 27.♞xb6! Bluebaum counters any idea from Black to get more tactical.

27...♞xb6 28.♞b6 ♞f4 29.♞d4 An even endgame emerged on the board. With both opponents playing precisely, a draw on move 56 came as a logical outcome.

29...♞e5 30.f3 ♞c7 31.a5 ♞c4 32.a6 ♞a4
33.h4 ♝g7 34.♞b7+ ♝h6 35.a7 ♞a2



Although finishing third, Alireza Firouzja left Samarkand disappointed

36.♞fb1 ♞e2+ 37.♞xe2 ♞exe2 38.♞d7
♞ed2 39.♞e1 d4 40.♝f1 ♞h2 41.♞e2 ♞a1+
42.♞e1 ♞h1+ 43.♝f2 ♞hxel 44.a8♖
♞xa8 45.♝xel ♞a2 46.♞xd4 ♞h2 47.♝f1
♝h5 48.♞d7 h6 49.♝g1 ♞xh4 50.♞d5+
g5 51.♞d6 ♞f4 52.♝g2 ♞f8 53.♝g3 ♞g8
54.♞a6 ♞g6 55.♞xg6 ♝xg6 56.f4 ♝xf4+

½-½

Firouzja was visibly disappointed with this result as, by this point in the round, it became clear that Bluebaum would be the one going to the Candidates due to a better tiebreak.

Despite winning third place, Firouzja failed to qualify for the Candidates. He didn't even attend the prize-giving ceremony to receive his award.

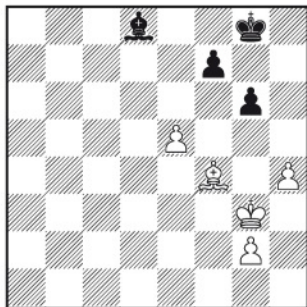
Another disappointed player in the event was Vincent Keymer. The winner of the German Championship, Keymer came to Samarkand right after his victory at the Chennai Grand Masters, the tournament in India where he dominated the field among top Indian players, winning with a round to spare. Still, despite scoring 7.5/11 and a performance of almost 2800, Keymer finished fourth, missing both on the Candidates and the bronze.

In Samarkand, Keymer scored several important victories, including against the 2023 Grand Swiss winner Vidit, as well as against Parham Maghsoodloo, who was the leader for a good part of the event. However, it was the round ten game against compatriot Bluebaum (analysed in this article a bit earlier) where Keymer missed several chances for a victory, which ultimately sealed his fate.

However, on more than one occasion, Keymer blundered away winning or good positions. In round five, he lost to Marc'Andria Maurizzi in the Sicilian. The position was even until the endgame when Keymer blundered in one move and lost.

Marc Andria Maurizzi – Vincent Keymer

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand, Uzbekistan (5)



White has just played his pawn to h4. Despite being a pawn down, Black should hold. The best move for Black here is to place his king to h7 and prevent any incursions. Instead, Keymer blundered.

37...f6??

38.e6 ♖f8 39.♔g4 ♖e7?? 40.h5!! gxf5+ 41.♔f5! Black is now completely lost. White will collect the pawn on the h-file and with an extra pawn on the g-file has just enough chances to get a

tempo and weaken the f6-pawn. Keymer continued to resist but it was hopeless.

41...♔a5 42.♔e3 ♔c3 43.♔c5+ ♖e8 44.♔g6 h4 45.♔f2 ♔b2 46.♔xh4 ♖e7 47.♔f5 ♔d4 48.♔e1 ♔b2 49.♔b4+ ♖e8 50.♔c5 ♔c3 51.♔e3 ♖e7 52.♔h6 ♔e1 53.♔g7 ♔h4 54.♔h8 ♔g5 55.g3

1-0

In round nine, Keymer defeated Maghsoodloo to reach the top of the scoreboard.

Parham Maghsoodloo - Vincent Keymer

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand, Uzbekistan (9)

1.♖f3 ♖f6 2.g3 c5 3.♔g2 ♔c6 4.0-0 e5 5.e4 ♔e7 6.♔c3 d6 The reversed English.

7.d3 ♔g4 8.h3 ♔e6 9.♖g5 ♔d7 10.f4 exf4 11.gxf4 h6 12.♖f3 g5! In the interview after the game, Keymer said that this was the point where he realised he had surprised his opponent, noting that Maghsoodloo was falling behind on time.

13.♔h2 A novelty, but not all novelties are great. Maghsoodloo spent a lot of time on this move, so it was invented at the board. The best move here is 13.e5 dxe5 14.♖xe5 ♖g8 with an unclear position.

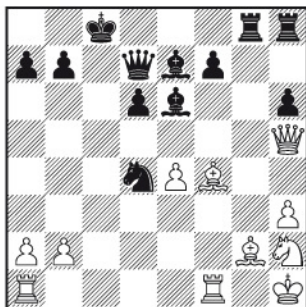
13...gxf4! Exposing the opponent's king.

14.♔e2 ♔h5 The alternatives were 14...♔g8 15.♖xf4 ♖c7; or 14...♖c7.

15.♖xf4 ♖xf4 16.♔xf4 ♔e6 "I should have a good position as his king is weak long-term" said Keymer after the game.

17.♔h1 ♖d7 18.♖h5 0-0-0 Already Black has a much easier game than White here.

19.c3 ♖dg8 20.d4! cxd4 21.cxd4 ♖xd4



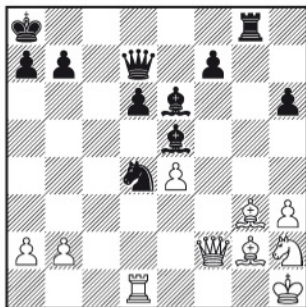
White has just given up a d4-pawn. The best move was 22.Rad1 but Maghsoodloo played with the wrong rook.

22.♖fd1 But now Black has a Zwischenzug!

22...♙g5! 23.♙g3 23.♙xg5? hxg5 loses immediately.

23...♙f6 24.♙f4 ♖b8! 25.♖d3 ♖a8 26.♖ad1 ♖g5!! There was no escape for White after this.

27.♗h4 ♖g6 28.♗f2 ♖hg8 29.♖g3 ♖xg3 30.♙xg3 ♙e5



In the post-game interview, Keymer said he spent time calculating an alternative move 30...♙xh3 31.♗xf6 ♘e2 32.♙f1 ♘xg3+ 33.♘xg3 ♖xg3 34.♗h8+ ♖c8 35.♗xc8+ ♙xc8 36.♖xd6 but said he thought that this was unclear. The engine, however, says Black is winning here, after 36...♙b8 37.♖xh6 ♙e6.

31.♙f1 ♙xh3! 32.♖xd4 ♙xd4 33.♗xd4 h5 34.e5! ♙xg2+ 35.♙xg2 h4 Too soon.

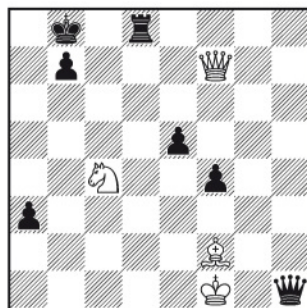
36.♗xh4 dxe5 37.♗e4 Missing an opportunity to split Black's pawns.

37...f6 38.♙f2 a6 39.a4 ♖g4 40.♗f3 ♗d4+ Now Keymer is back on track.

41.♙g2 ♗xb2+ 42.♙h3 ♖g6 43.♙f2 ♗c2! 44.♙g3 ♗xa4 45.♗e3 ♗d4 46.♗e2 ♗d7+ 47.♙h2 ♖g4 48.♗e3 ♗d4 49.♗e2 ♗f4 50.♗c2 ♗c4 51.♗d2 ♖g8 52.♗b2 ♖h8+ 53.♙g1 ♖c8 54.♙e2 ♗c6 55.♗a3 ♗e4 56.♗a2 ♗f3 57.♗e6 ♖d8 58.♙g3 ♙b8 59.♙f1 ♗c6 60.♗e7 ♖g8+ 61.♙g3 a5 62.♗f7 ♖d8 63.♗e7 ♗d6 64.♗f7 a4 65.♙f1 a3 66.♙e3 f5! A small finishing touch!

67.♙h2 If 67.♙xf5 then ♗d5!

67...f4 68.♙c4 ♗h6+ 69.♙g2 ♗c6+ 70.♙f1 ♗h1+



White can't avoid checkmate.

0-1

Keymer had a strong tournament, but his nerves failed him in critical moments too often, showing that he still isn't ready for the Candidates. However, at 20 years of age, he will have more than enough time and opportunities to get there.



Vincent Keymer finished fourth despite a performance rating near 2800, missing both Candidates qualification and the bronze medal on tiebreaks

THE INDIANS UNDERPERFORMED IN SAMARKAND

Despite having three of the top four seeds (Praggnanandhaa, Erigaisi, Gukesh), none of the Indian GMs qualified for the 2026 Candidates Tournament via the Grand Swiss.

Although Indian male players will not remember Samarkand as their shining moment, they did not perform badly altogether: Arjun Erigaisi, Nihal Sarin, and Vidit Santosh Gujrathi (who won the 2023 Grand Swiss) all finished with a respectable 7/11, placing them in a large tie for 5th to 17th place.

However, the top seeds disappointed. The three highest-rated Indian players - World Champion Gukesh D, top seed Praggnanandhaa, and second seed Arjun Erigaisi all finished below their starting positions.

Praggnanandhaa lost to Bluebaum in round five after overlooking a pawn and in round ten lost to Hans Niemann, which shattered any chances for him to reach the top spots. He finished the tournament on 6/11.

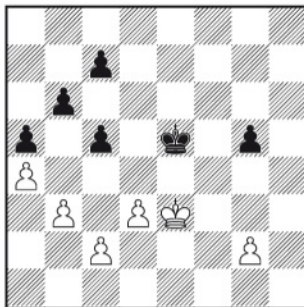
Arjun Erigaisi was solid in Samarkand, but did not show that elan vital needed for the decisive push at the top. Throughout the tournament Erigaisi was in the group of players half a point behind the leader(s). His key loss came in round seven when he was defeated by Bluebaum in a game where he made several unforced errors. In the final round, he held Vincent Keymer to a draw, finishing on 7/11, in a tie for fifth place.

Nihal Sarin is India's best performing player in the 2025 Grand Swiss, finishing in shared fifth place (9th on tiebreaks). He is the only one to have been in the lead during the tournament, after he stunned Parham Maghsoodloo in round seven to grab shared first place with Bluebaum on 5.5 points. But he failed to maintain the lead, suffering a loss to Firouzja in round nine and missing a win against Abudattorov in round 10.

The defender of the 2023 Grand Swiss crown, Vidit Santosh Gujrathi, had a mixed bag of results. He started with a win but later let a winning rook endgame against Ivanchuk in round four slip into a draw. His crucial loss came in round eight. After several hours of play, Vidit (Black) was in a drawn pawn endgame against Vincent Kaymer. In one move, he threw it all away.

Vincent Keymer – Vidit Santosh Gujrathi

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand,
Uzbekistan (8)





Black should have just held the line with ♖d5 - ♖e5.

43...c6?? And now he is completely lost.

44.c4! ♖f5 45.♗f3 ♖f6 46.♗e4 ♖e6
47.g3 ♖f6 48.g4 ♖e6 49.d4 cxd4
50.♗xd4 ♖d6 51.c5+ bxc5+ 52.♖c4
♖e5 53.♗xc5 ♖f4 54.b4 axb4 55.♗xb4
♗xg4 56.a5 ♖h3 57.a6 g4 58.a7 g3
59.a8♖ g2 60.♖a7 ♖h2 61.♖f2 ♖h1
62.♖h4+ ♖g1 63.♖c3

1-0

This loss came in the most critical moment of the tournament, eliminating Vidit from the race for the top. Vidit drew with Mishra in the final round, finishing on 7/11.

A TOURNAMENT THE WORLD CHAMPION WILL HOPE TO FORGET

The biggest negative surprise of the entire tournament was the performance of the World Champion, Gukesh D, who finished in 47th place, on 6/11 and a rating performance of 2668, almost 100 points lower than his actual rating.

Despite not needing to play in the event, Gukesh chose to take part. "In Swiss tournaments you need to win more games and take a bit more chances. I'm glad there will be a lot of hungry players and exciting games. Even though I've been playing a lot of closed tournaments, I'll try to adjust my preparation for the open event here", the World Champion said at the opening press conference.

Gukesh has had a bright year up until Samarkand. He finished as the runner-up at Tata Steel and took third place in Norway Chess, where he defeated Carlsen and Nakamura. While his strength and world crown made him an exceptionally strong favourite in the tournament, his status also

made him a prime target for many of the players in the Grand Swiss. The 19-year-old is already renowned for his focus and for managing to keep his nerves steady but in Samarkand, that clearly wasn't the case. If anything, the Grand Swiss in Samarkand will be a tournament the world champion would most likely want to forget.

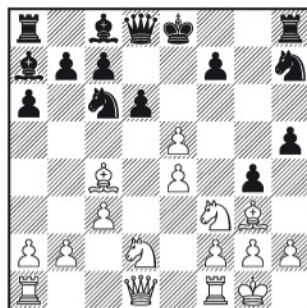
The World Champion started with two victories and two draws in the first four rounds. But then he suffered a critical slump, losing three games in a row - to Abhimanyu Mishra, Nikolas Theodorou, and Ediz Gurel, causing him to completely "sink in the tournament."

In round five, Gukesh found himself in an uncomfortable position against Abhimanyu Mishra in the early stages of the game.

Abhimanyu Mishra - Gukesh D

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand,
Uzbekistan (5)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♖c4 ♖c5 4.d3
♘f6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4 a6 7.0-0 d6 8.c3
♗a7 9.♘bd2 g5 10.♗g3 ♘h7 11.d4 h5
12.dxe5 g4 In the Giuoco Piano, Gukesh
overstretched himself.

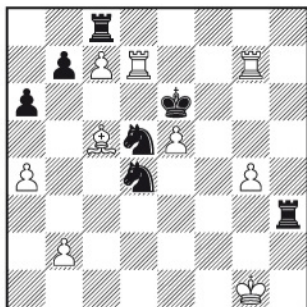


Black has played 12...g4? and allowed White a piece sacrifice that offered more than sufficient compensation.

13.exd6 gxf3 14.dxc7 ♖e7 15.♘xf3 In the moves that followed Mishra was not

precise in executing his advantage and even allowed Gukesh to equalise.

15...♙g4 16.h3 ♘e6 17.♙d6 ♔d7
18.♙e6 ♖xe6 19.e5 ♘d7 20.♘d4 ♙xd4
21.cxd4 ♔d5 22.♖xh5 ♘f6 23.♖f5+
♖e6 24.♖xe6+ ♔xe6 25.f4 ♘d5 26.f5 exf5
27.♖xf5 ♘xd4 28.♖f7+ ♙e6 29.♖af1
♙hg8 30.g4 ♘b5 31.♖h7 ♙g6 32.♖ff7
♙c8 33.♙d7 ♙h6 34.♙hg7 ♙xh3 35.a4
♘d4 36.♙c5 Here, in another critical
moment, Gukesh misplayed again.



Black's best choice was to play 36...♖d3 and force a draw with checks. Instead, Gukesh blundered.

36...♘e2+

37.♙f1 Black is lost as his king is in a mating net.

37...♘ef4 38.♙d4 ♖f3+ 39.♙e1 ♘d3+
40.♙d2 ♘xe5 41.♙xe5 ♙xe5 42.♙g5+
♙e6 43.♙gxd5 And now White has a
passer on the g-file in addition to the c7-
pawn which has pinned one of Black's
rooks to the eighth rank.

43...♖b3 44.♖7d6+ ♙e7 45.♖d7+ ♙e6
46.♖5d6+ ♙e5 47.♖d3 ♙xb2+ 48.♙c1 ♙h2
49.g5 ♙f5 50.♖3d5+ ♙e6 51.♖5d6+ ♙e5
52.♖d2 ♙h1+ 53.♙b2 ♙f5 54.♖g7 ♙hh8
55.♖f2+ ♙e5 56.g6 ♙h4 57.♖gf7 b5 58.axb5
axb5 59.g7 ♖b4+ 60.♙c3 ♖c4+ 61.♙b3

1-0



Gukesh D's disappointing Grand Swiss performance included a drawn position against Divya in round eight that he failed to convert to victory

A major early upset for the World Champion from which he did not recover. What followed were missed chances and better positions thrown away. In the round eight game against Divya, Gukesh dropped a clearly winning position and drew. He finally managed to end his six-game winless streak in Round 10, defeating Gabriel Sargissian. In round eleven, Gukesh defeated Volokitin to finish on 6/11.

THE GENERATIONAL CHESS REVOLUTION

Remember the heavyweights such as Aronian, Grischuk, Dubov, Nepomniachtchi, Fedoseev? They were nowhere to be seen on the top boards in the Grand Swiss, all finishing below 40th place.

Perhaps no single youngster captured the tournament's essence better than 14-year-old Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus - the youngest GM in the world at the time of play - who finished on 6/11 but with a performance of 2721, way above his 2646 rating.

As early as round two, he calmly held World Champion Gukesh D to a draw on board one. When English IM Jovanka Houska branded Gukesh's unusual 3.c3 as "anti-



youngster" preparation, she unwittingly highlighted one of the tournament's key narratives: the relentless rise of chess prodigies who refuse to be intimidated by reputation or rating.

Then, in round four, he made a masterpiece - a spectacular victory against GM Aditya Mittal.

Aditya Mittal - Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand, Uzbekistan (4)

1.c4 e6 2.♘c3 d5 3.d4 dxc4 4.e4 c5 5.d5 5.♘f3 is also an option here.

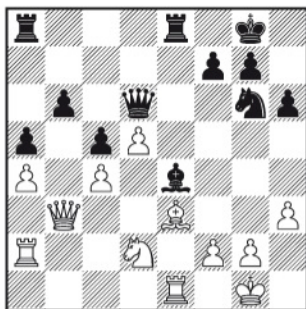
5...exd5 6.exd5 The engines also mention 6.♘xd5 which looks more natural, securing a strong square for the knight.

6...♙d6 7.♙xc4 ♘e7 In case of 7...♘f6? then 8.♙e2+ ♙e7 9.♘b5! and White is winning.

8.h3 0-0 9.♘f3 ♘d7 10.0-0 ♘b6 11.b3 Securing the d5-passer.

11...♘xc4 12.bxc4 ♘g6 13.♘e4 ♙f5 14.♘xd6 ♙xd6 15.♙b3 b6 16.a4 a5 17.♖e1 ♖fe8 18.♙e3 h6 19.♖a2 ♙e4 Black has more than equality here.

20.♘d2?



20.♙d2 was safer. The position is equal after 20...♙xf3 21.♙xf3 ♖xe1+ 22.♙xe1

♖e8. But now, with the knight on d2, things are different.

20...♘h4! 21.♙xc5 And now starts a sequence of moves which showed the immense calculation powers both players had.

If 21.♘xe4 ♖xe4 Black ends in a more comfortable position, moving his queen to g6 and then placing the rook on e8;

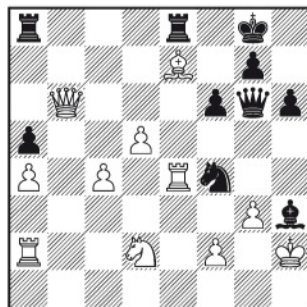
21.g3 suggested by the computer as an option 21...♙g6 (21...♘f3+ 22.♘xf3 ♙xf3 23.♖aa1) 22.♙h2 ♘g2.

21...♙g6! 22.g3 ♙g2! 23.♙e7! The only move for White here. If 23.♖xe8+? ♖xe8 24.♙e3 ♙xh3 and Black is winning.

23...♙xh3 24.♙h2 ♘g2?! 24...♙d7! is stronger. After 25.gxh4 ♖xe7 26.♖xe7 ♙d6+ 27.♙g3 ♙xe7 and White is in trouble.

25.♖e5! f6 26.♙xb6! Sharp.

26...♘f4 27.♖e4?



27.♖e3! was required here.

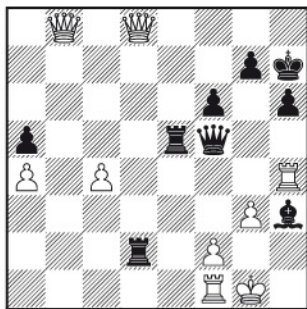
27...♙h5! White's rook is hanging.

28.♖xf4 If 28.gxf4 ♙f5+.

28...♙g4+! 29.♙g1 29...♖xe7 Despite being a pawn down, Black is winning. The white king is under attack while his pieces are not coordinated.

30.♖a1 ♖ae8 31.♖f1 ♗h3? 32.d6 ♖e2
33.♗h4 ♜f5 34.♞b5?! ♜8e5! 35.d7?
The final mistake. 35.♞b8+ offered
more hope.

35...♖xd2 36.♞b8+ ♔h7 37.d8=♞



37...♞xf2+!! An effective combination for
the end.

38.♖xf2 ♖e1+ 39.♔h2 ♖xf2+ 40.♔xh3
♖h1+ 41.♔g4 f5+ 42.♔h5 g6#

0-1

The win showed an almost flawless calculation by Erdogmus who is yet to make his big mark in elite chess.

In the following round, the Turkish prodigy played an epic, 190-move marathon game against the Uzbek youngster Nodirbek Abdusattorov, managing to survive in a difficult endgame.

Erdogmus plays fighting chess - bold, stubborn, completely unfazed when staring down the world champion himself. Mark the name down because we'll be hearing plenty more from him.

The teenage brigade collectively had a great showing at this Grand Swiss. By the final round, they'd scalped multiple 2700-rated victims, with 16-year-old Abhimanyu Mishra leading the rampage. His round five demolition of Gukesh also made



Turkish prodigy Erdogmus (14) captured the tournament's essence with his fearless approach

history - youngest player ever to topple a reigning world champion in classical time controls, smashing a 30-year-old record that belonged to Gata Kamsky.

Ediz Gürel proved that Turkish chess has serious depth coming through the ranks. The 16-year-old announced himself by holding Vincent Keymer to a draw in round one, then delivered the tournament's biggest shock in round seven. Gukesh botched the endgame and handed Gürel a victory that piled onto the world champion's misery - his third straight loss in a tournament going completely sideways.

Gürel's 5.5 points might look modest on paper, but context tells the real story. Taking down the world champion when he's wobbling? That's the kind of result that launches careers.

The American contingent proved equally impressive. Fifteen-year-old Andy Woodward announced himself with

The strongest player doesn't always win. The youngest doesn't always fold. The oldest doesn't always fade



victories over Levon Aronian and Parham Maghsoodloo, while Mishra's unbeaten streak now stands at an astonishing 67 games in classical chess - a mark reached in recent years only by elite players like Wesley So and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave at their peaks.

And of course, the leading figure among the youngsters is Hans Niemann. His performance in Samarkand established him as a major contender among the young generation at the FIDE Grand Swiss 2025. At 22 years old, Niemann played a tournament marked by high stakes and dramatic twists. He finished with a strong 7/11 points, placing him in a large tie for fifth place.

CHESS LEGENDS REFUSING TO FADE

The Grand Swiss threw up one of those lovely chess stories - three players over 50 mixing it with kids half their age and mostly holding their own.

Alexei Shirov turned back the clock at 53, going unbeaten with a +2 score for 21st place. Not bad for someone who should supposedly be past it. His round nine demolition of Bjerre had echoes of the Shirov we remember from his prime, all fire and calculation. This was his second strong showing at the Grand Swiss, after placing eighth in 2021 - Shirov clearly hasn't read the memo about declining with age.

Vasyl Ivanchuk proved even more stubborn. At 56, the great Ukrainian GM had no problem taking on players born when he was already a grandmaster. "I'm happy that I'm still an active player and in quite good shape, so I can play against

Ivanchuk: *"I'm happy that I'm still an active player and in quite good shape, so I can play against strong players."*

strong players," he said afterwards, with typical understatement. Ivanchuk's presence alone elevated the tournament - watching him work through positions remained pure chess poetry. He finished on 6/11.

Only Boris Gelfand struggled among the old guard. The 57-year-old former world championship challenger started solidly but suffered three defeats as younger legs and sharper preparation took their toll. At this level, the margins are brutal, and Gelfand found them unforgiving, finishing in 97th place on 4.5 points.

A TOURNAMENT THAT REWROTE THE SCRIPT

This Grand Swiss will stick in the memory for all the right reasons. Teenagers stared down world champions without blinking. Mathematical precision decided careers. Veterans proved age means nothing if you still have the hunger.

Giri summed it up perfectly: "If you're a player like me, not really good, then I need to believe in miracles!" Self-deprecating rubbish, of course, but the sentiment rang true. In modern chess, ratings matter less than they used to. Preparation, grit and a bit of luck can topple anybody.

The Swiss system showed its worth again - eleven rounds gave everyone a proper chance while keeping the drama cranked up to eleven. Samarkand's ancient trading routes provided a fitting backdrop for chess's own cultural exchange, where ideas and ambitions crossed generations and continents.

In Samarkand, 172 world-class players spent 11 rounds creating chess poetry and drama. This tournament had everything - kids with nothing to lose taking apart established stars, old-timers refusing to accept they're past it, hotshot favourites getting a sobering slap, and no-hopers grabbing their one shot at glory with

both hands. That's chess stripped to its essence.

The strongest player doesn't always win. The youngest doesn't always fold. The oldest doesn't always fade. In Samarkand, the game reminded us why we fell in love with it in the first place - because when the pieces start moving, absolutely anything can happen.

A MEMORABLE END TO A MEMORABLE GRAND SWISS

The closing ceremony at the Silk Road by Minyoun Hotel conference hall provided a fitting end to what FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich called "a truly magnificent event".

After the national anthems of Uzbekistan and FIDE were performed, distinguished guests - including the Director of the Youth Affairs Agency of Uzbekistan Alisher Sa'dullayev and Samarkand Region Governor Adiz Boboev - delivered congratulatory speeches, followed by the official prize-giving ceremony conducted by Chief Arbiter Laurent Freyd.

Arkady Dvorkovich, who awarded Anish Giri the victory cup, praised the tournament's strength and drama. "Not only was this the strongest lineup of all the Grand Swiss tournaments so far, but it brought the most drama - with

Not only was this the strongest lineup of all the Grand Swiss tournaments so far, but it brought the most drama - with leadership ties and uncertainty well into the last round.

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Director of the Youth Affairs Agency of Uzbekistan Alisher Sa'dullayev, FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich, and Samarkand Region Governor Adiz Boboev

leadership ties and uncertainty well into the last round," he said, congratulating the four qualifiers Giri, Bluebaum, Vaishali and Lagno before thanking all the participants for "putting on a great chess show which will be remembered in history."

The FIDE President emphasised chess's global reach and the symbolic importance of hosting the event in Samarkand, noting the ancient Silk Road city as having "strong roots" in chess history while also representing the game's future.

With the 2026 Chess Olympiad also scheduled to take place in Samarkand, Dvorkovich expressed optimism about the continued partnership with Uzbekistan.



VAISHALI AND LAGNO: MASTERS OF DIFFERENT STYLES

In the Women's event, on 8/11, Vaishali Rameshbabu and Kateryna Lagno tied for first and both qualified for the Candidates, but Vaishali took top spot on tiebreak. It was her second consecutive Grand Swiss victory - something never achieved before in either section.

The women's tournament showcased close but different paths to success. Vaishali's journey was more turbulent, featuring spectacular victories and one costly defeat, ultimately decided by her superior clutch play. Kateryna Lagno's route was built on solid, uncompromising chess - she remained unbeaten throughout while gradually accumulating advantages.

Vaishali's consecutive victories in the Grand Swiss (2023 and 2025) are a historic achievement unmatched in either the Open or Women's section. Even the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, went to X to congratulate.

Vaishali's performance was characterised by a strong start, a late-tournament comeback, and high-stakes stability when it mattered most. She started with three victories after which she became the sole leader of the tournament. In game three she defeated Olga Badelka, playing valiantly in a sharp position despite being down to the last minute. Then came two draws - with Wagner and Lagno - followed by two more victories after which Vaishali was again the sole leader. Then in round eight came a nasty surprise - Vaishali lost to Bibisara Assaubayeva. In round nine she drew with Guo Qi.

Her win in Round 10, when she made a comeback from a lost position against Mariya Muzychuk, was critical for regaining the lead.



Outstanding accomplishment. Congrats to Vaishali Rameshbabu. Her passion and dedication are exemplary. Best wishes for her future endeavours.

@chessvaishali



Vaishali Rameshbabu - Mariya Muzychuk

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand,
Uzbekistan (10)

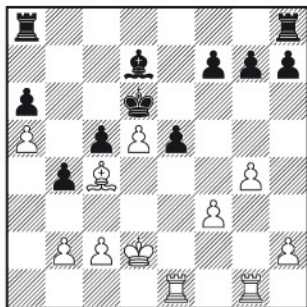
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 e5 6.♗db5 d6 7.♗d5 ♗xd5 8.exd5 ♗b8 9.♔g1 ♕e7 10.g4!? Discussing this position in the post-game analysis, Vaishali said: "I had a very nice idea in this opening, the Sveshnikov, to go ♔g1 and g4, but later I didn't continue it well."

10...♗d7 11.♕e3 a6 12.♗c3 ♕g5 13.♕xg5 ♗xg5 14.♗d2 4.♗e4! ♗e7 15.♗f3 gave more chances to White.

14...♖xd2+ 15.♔xd2 b5!? Vaishali spent a lot of time here.

16.a4?! Vaishali spent 34 minutes on this move. 16.b4! offered more to White.

16...b4 17.♖e4 ♖e7 18.a5 ♖c5 19.f3 ♔d7 20.♖xc5 dxc5 21.♔c4 ♖d6 22.♖ae1

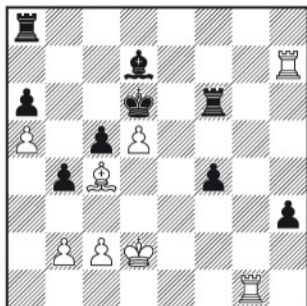


22...g5! Countering White's push.

23.h4 gxh4 24.f4 "I don't know if this h4, f4 was right or wrong, but with less time, it was just a gamble," she said after the game. By this point, Vaishali had two minutes on her clock, while Mariya Muzychuk had almost 40!

24...f6 25.g5?! 25.fxe5+! fxe5 26.♖ef1 was better for White.

25...exf4 26.gxf6 ♖hf8 27.♖e7 ♖xf6 28.♖xh7 h3

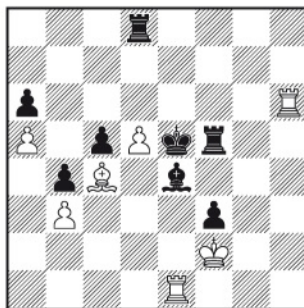


Black is a pawn up, has more active pieces and initiative across the board. But Muzychuk squandered her advantage and allowed Vaishali to equalise.

29.♖e2 ♔f5 30.♖h4 ♔xc2? Giving up one of her main trumps - the h3-passer - at the wrong moment. Black should have activated one of her rooks first, either with 30...♖a7 or more straightforward 30...♖e8+.

31.♖xh3 ♔e4?! After the second mistake, Black has just a slight advantage. ♔a4-b5 was the right approach.

32.♖f2 ♖e5 33.b3 ♖d8 34.♖e1 f3 35.♖h5+ ♖f5 36.♖h6



36...♔d4? This is the start of Muzychuk's downfall. In time trouble, Black played overconfidently and slipped. 36...♖f4! was essential here,

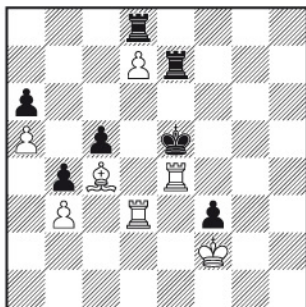
37.d6?! 37.♖h4! ♖e5 38.♖e3! is already winning here,

37...♖g5? Missing 37...♔c2!

38.♖h4! ♖e5 39.♖e3 39...♖e8 Black opens the e5-square while at the same time defending the bishop.

40.d7! ♖e7 Black tries to hold.

41.♖d3+! ♖e5 42.♖xe4+!



Black is lost, facing the unstoppable promotion of the pawn. 42. ♖xe4+ ♜xe4 43. ♖e3+ ♜d4 44. ♖xe7 and that would have been it! Muzychuk resigned.

1-0

“I was just really lucky to get this point”, was the first thing Vaishali said after the game.

The win lifted her to 7/10, tied for first with Kateryna Lagno, who in the same round drew as Black against former Women’s World Champion Tan Zhongyi.

In the final round, Vaishali played against another former World Champion, Tan Zhongyi. Tan had already qualified for the Candidates even before the Grand Swiss, so she was under no pressure, unlike Vaishali.

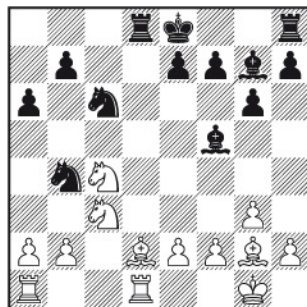
Playing on board one, the game lasted three and a half hours. Playing the English, Tan was in the mood for a fight.

Tan Zhongyi – Vaishali Rameshbabu

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand, Uzbekistan (11)

1.c4 c5 2. ♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5. ♘g2 ♘c6 6.d4 cxd4 7. ♘xd4 ♘db4 8. ♘b5 8... ♘xc6 is the main line here.

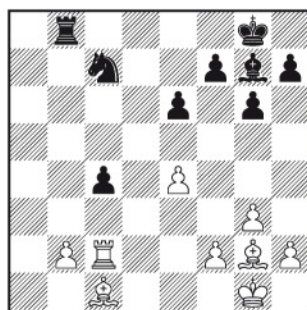
8... ♘f5 9.0-0 a6 10. ♘5a3 ♖xd1 11. ♖xd1 g6 12. ♘d2 ♖d8 13. ♘c3 ♘g7 14. ♘c4!



Analysing this position, Vaishali said she missed this move which forced her to spend 30 minutes thinking.

14... ♘c2! If 14...0-0 15. ♘e3 ♘d7 16.a3! and Black is in dire straits.

15. ♖dc1 b5! 16.a3 bxc4 17.axb4 ♘xb4 18. ♘d5 ♘xd5 19. ♖xc2 0-0 20. ♖xa6 e6 21.e4 ♘c7 22. ♖b6 ♖b8 23. ♖xb8 ♖xb8 24. ♘c1



24...c3 25.bxc3 ♘b5! Regaining the pawn. The point is that 23.c4 fails to 23... ♘d4! winning at least an exchange.

26. ♖b2

♖a8 Another precise move by Vaishali. Now Black liquidates into a drawish endgame.

27. ♖xb5 ♖a1 28. ♖b8+ ♘f8 29. ♘f1 ♖xc1 30. ♖c8 ♘g7 White had an extra pawn, but



Always by each other's side, but this time – not at the top: the Muzychuk sisters, Mariya (L) and Anna (R)

with active pieces and opposite-coloured bishops Black was out of danger. Still, the game continued for a few more moves.

31.♘g2 ♖b4 32.c4 ♜c2 33.♘f3 ♜c3+
34.♘e2 ♜c1 35.♙h3 ♜c2+ 36.♘f1 ♜c1+
37.♘g2 h5 38.♜c7 ♘f8 39.f4 ♜c2+
40.♘g1 ♙c3 41.♜c8+ ♘g7 42.♜c7 ♘f8
43.♜c8+ ♘g7

½-½

With this draw, Vaishali secured joint first place with Kateryna Lagno - both qualifying for the Candidates by virtue of the best tiebreaks among the chasing pack.

Kateryna Lagno played a great tournament, scoring 8/11, matching Vaishali Rameshbabu at the top to punch her ticket to the 2026 Candidates. Lagno remained unbeaten in all eleven rounds - five wins, six draws, zero losses.

The seasoned player (and wife of Alexander Grischuk) Lagno sat pretty near the summit from early on, sharing first after round four

before seizing outright control in round eight. Her demolition of former world champion Mariya Muzychuk proved the decisive moment - a crushing win.

Kateryna Lagno – Mariya Muzychuk

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand, Uzbekistan (8)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♙c3 e6
5.♙g5 h6 6.♙xf6 The main line here is
6.♙h4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.♙g3 b5.

6...♞xf6 7.a3 ♘d7 The main move for Black is 7...dxc4 8.e3. Mariya made a somewhat risky choice here.

8.e4 dxe4 9.♘xe4 ♞f4 Black had a chance to equalise here with 9...♞d8 10.c5 ♘f6 11.♘xf6+ ♞xf6 12.♙d3 g6 13.0-0 ♙g7.

10.♙d3 ♘f6 Another options was 10...♙e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♜e1, giving White a small advantage.

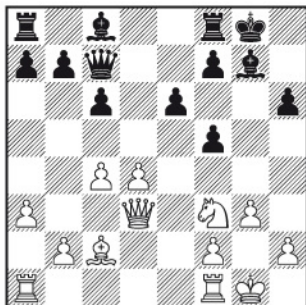
11.g3 ♞c7 12.♘xf6+ gxf6 Black has a bad pawn structure.



13.0-0 A novelty.

13...♙g7 14.♙c2 The black king is stuck in the centre which is tempting for White. Attack is imminent.

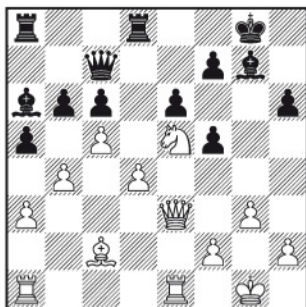
14...0-0 15.♖d3 f5



16.c5! 16...♖d8 17.♗fe1 b6 Opening the centre.

18.b4 a5 19.♖e3 ♙a6 19...axb4! 20.axb4 and now **20...♙a6** was better.

20.♘e5!



The attack is underway.

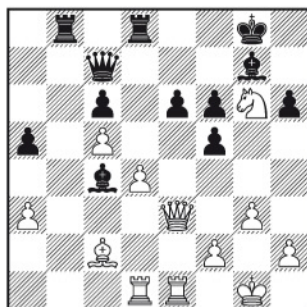
20...bxc5 21.bxc5 ♖ab8 If **21...♙xe5 22.dxe5 ♘h7 23.♖ad1** and White is much better.

22.♖ad1 White keeps up the pressure.

22...f6 23.♘g6 ♙c4



Kateryna Lagno tied for first place on 8/11 points, securing her Candidates spot on tiebreaks



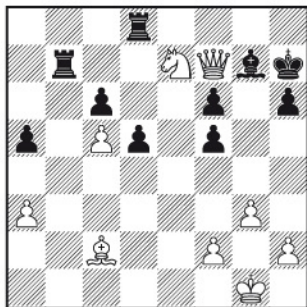
24.d5!! The start of the decisive phase of White's attack.

24...♙xd5 25.♖xd5 exd5 26.♘e7+! In the case of **26.♖e6+**, Black had **26...♖f7**, giving some hope.

26...♖h8 27.♖e6 ♖d7 28.♖f7! Checkmate is near.

28...♖b7 28...♗e8 29.♘g6+ and Black loses the queen.

29.♘g6+ ♔h7 30.♗e7! ♚xe7 31.♘xe7



Hard to believe that a player such as Mariya Muzychuk ended up with this position. Here Black had no better choice than to resign.

1-0

In the final round Lagno went for a swift draw with Ulviyya Fataliyeva of Azerbaijan (who herself had a great run in Samarkand).

At this stage of her career, Lagno knows exactly what she's chasing. She's won everything else there is to win in women's chess apart from one. The classical world title remains the one prize missing from her collection, and this Candidates berth puts her one step closer to achieving it.

The tragic hero of the 2025 edition of the Women's Grand Swiss is the third-placed Bibisara Assaubayeva who narrowly missed on the qualification to the Candidates. The two-time Women's World Blitz Champion put on a performance that had everything except the finish she craved. On 7.5/11, she was in shared third place, with Tan Zhongyi and Yuxin Song, ending as third on tiebreaks.

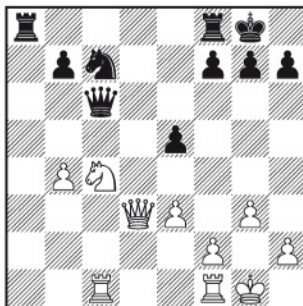
The Kazakhstani's signature moment came in round eight when she stopped Vaishali Rameshbabu cold, ending the Indian's perfect start with a statement win that shook up the leaderboard.

**Bibisara Assaubayeva –
Vaishali Rameshbabu**

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Chess.com (8)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♖b4+ 4.♗d2 ♚e7
5.g3 ♗xd2+ 6.♘fxd2 ♘c6 7.e3 0-0 8.♘c3
a5 9.a3 d6 10.♗g2 e5 11.d5 ♘b8 12.0-0
♘a6 13.b4 ♗g4 14.♚b3 ♚d7 15.♘ce4
♘xe4 16.♘xe4 ♗f5 17.♘d2 ♗h3 18.♚c3
♗xg2 19.♗xg2 c6 20.dxc6 ♚xc6+ 21.♗g1
axb4 22.axb4 ♘c7 23.♚d3 d5! Black
makes a timely push through the centre.

24.♖ac1 dxc4 25.♘xc4

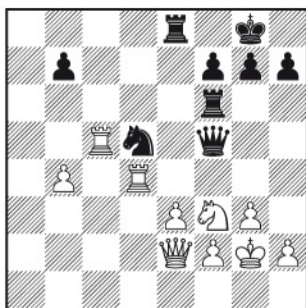


25...♖ad8? Overlooking the e5-pawn. Instead, 25...♘d5! would have maintained equality.

26.♘xe5! If 26...♖xd3 27.♖xc6 bxc6 28.♘xd3 and White would have been two pawns up.

Vaishali struggled to find the right plan and spent the following moves shuffling pieces on the board, eventually trapping the knight and queen in a pin.

26...♚e6 27.♚c4 ♘d5 28.♘f3 28...♚f5
29.♗g2 ♗d6 30.♖fd1 ♖fd8 31.♖d4 ♖c6
32.♚f1 ♖f6 33.♚e2 ♗e8 34.♖c5



Black is completely paralysed and cannot effectively prevent the deadly 35.e4.

34...♖d6 35.e4 ♔d7 36.♔d2 Now White wins a piece.

36...♟f4+ 37.♚xf4 ♜xd4 38.♞c7 ♜exe4 39.♞xd7

1-0

A precise execution by Assaubayeva who tied Vaishali at the top of the scoreboard after this game.

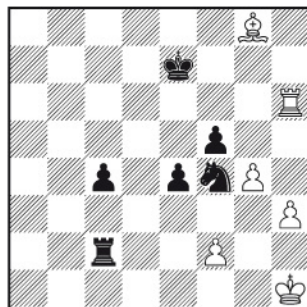
In round nine, she was on the brink of victory against Lagno, but threw it all away in just one move.

With the white pieces, she gained a slight initiative out of the King's Indian, but from move 19 Lagno made several subpar moves and lost a pawn. After reaching the first

time control, Assaubayeva was on the brink of victory.

Kateryna Lagno – Bibisara Assaubayeva

FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Chess.com (9)



Black should have just proceeded with advancing her pawn and collecting the f2-pawn. For example: 43...c3! 44.♞c6 ♟d7 45.♞c4 ♜xf2 46.♞xc2 ♟e2! 47.♞a3 f4 and Black's pawns are much faster.

42...♟f8?? This allowed White to save her skin with the timely bishop sacrifice.

43.♟xc4! ♜xc4 44.♞f6+ ♔e7 45.♞xf5 Now White just pushed pawns, traded the rooks and forced a draw due to insufficient material.

45...♟d3 46.♟g2 ♔e6 47.♟g3 ♞c3 48.h4 ♞c1 49.h5 ♞g1+ 50.♟h3 ♟e5 51.♞g5 ♟f3 52.♞f5 ♟e5 53.♞g5 ♟d5 54.♟h2 ♜xg4 55.♞xg4 ♟xg4+ 56.♟g3 ♟f6 57.♟h4 ♟h7 58.♟g4 ♟e5 59.h6

1/2-1/2

Walking into the final round, she still had a shot. Beat Anna Muzychuk and hope results went her way - simple enough on paper. But chess has a cruel sense of timing. Assaubayeva built up a winning position only to let it slip through her fingers, settling for a draw that sealed her fate outside the qualification zone.

Playing White in the Giuoco Piano, Assaubayeva built a towering position by

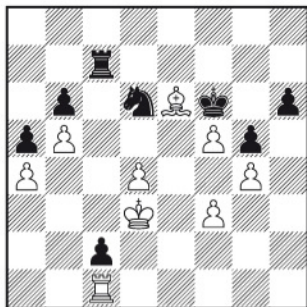


Bibisara Assaubayeva

move 33 but misplayed. Muzychuk gave her a second chance in the endgame, but it too slipped away.

Bibisara Assaubayeva - Anna Muzychuk

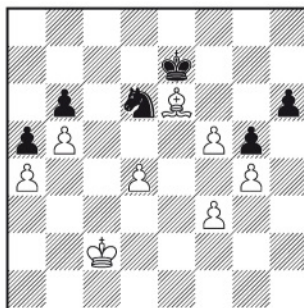
FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 Samarkand,
Uzbekistan (11)



White is completely winning here, but now she committed a decisive mistake.

47. ♖xc2? After this move, it's a draw. Instead, 47. ♔b3! ♕g7 48. ♔xc2 and White gets an extra pawn.

47... ♖xc2 48. ♔xc2 ♕e7!



Black has built a fortress on the dark squares, placing her king on d6 and knight on f6. Despite two extra pawns White can't make progress and the game soon ended in a draw.

49. ♔d3 ♖e8 50. ♔e4 ♔d6 51. ♔c4 ♖f6+
52. ♔e3 ♕e7 53. d5 ♔d6 54. ♔d4 ♖d7
55. ♔e2 ♖f6 56. ♔c4 ♖d7

½-½

The bronze medal on tiebreaks offers cold comfort. Assaubayeva showed she belongs at this level, mixing solid play with moments of genuine inspiration. Just not quite enough inspiration when it mattered most.



FIDE GRAND SWISS 2025 SEP 3, 2025 – SEP 16, 2025
Overall Standings

Rk	SNo	Name	Rtg	Pts	TB1	TB2	TB3
1	7	GM Giri, Anish	2746	8	2668	62	66.5
2	32	GM Bluebaum, Matthias	2671	7.5	2695	66	70
3	4	GM Firouzja, Alireza	2754	7.5	2684	64	68.5
4	5	GM Keymer, Vincent	2751	7.5	2668	62.5	68
5	86	GM Mishra, Abhimanyu	2611	7	2731	69.5	73.5
6	2	GM Erigaisi, Arjun	2771	7	2687	63	67.5
7	108	GM Woodward, Andy	2557	7	2686	61	64.5
8	12	GM Niemann, Hans Moke	2733	7	2668	60.5	64.5
9	20	GM Nihal, Sarin	2693	7	2666	61.5	65.5
10	6	GM Abdusattorov, Nodirbek	2748	7	2663	63	68
11	19	GM Liang, Awonder	2698	7	2659	56	60
12	17	GM Rapport, Richard	2711	7	2657	57	62
13	10	GM Mamedyarov, Shakhriyar	2741	7	2649	55.5	60
14	28	GM Yakubboev, Nodirbek	2681	7	2645	59.5	64
15	16	GM Vidit, Santosh Gujrathi	2712	7	2640	61	66
16	11	GM Vachier-Lagrave, Maxime	2738	7	2637	60.5	65
17	15	GM Yu, Yangyi	2714	7	2634	60.5	65.5
18	22	GM Sevian, Samuel	2692	7	2633	54.5	58.5
19	25	GM Esipenko, Andrey	2687	7	2630	56	60.5
20	43	GM Sargsyan, Shant	2653	6.5	2693	61.5	65.5

GM GIRI, ANISH | Starting rank 7 | Rating 2746 | Federation NED

Rk	Bo	SNo	Name	Rtg	FED	Col	Res.
1	7	65	GM Hovhannisyan, Robert	2629	ARM	B	1
2	4	58	GM Salem, A.R. Saleh	2640	UAE	W	0.5
3	7	56	GM Svane, Frederik	2643	GER	W	0.5
4	6	68	GM Cheparinov, Ivan	2627	BUL	B	0.5
5	9	39	GM Oparin, Grigoriy	2660	USA	W	1
6	3	87	GM Maurizzi, Marcandria	2610	FRA	B	1
7	3	86	GM Mishra, Abhimanyu	2611	USA	W	0.5
8	4	21	GM Maghsoodloo, Parham	2692	IRI	B	0.5
9	4	23	GM Van Foreest, Jorden	2692	NED	W	1
10	1	4	GM Firouzja, Alireza	2754	FRA	B	0.5
11	2	12	GM Niemann, Hans Moke	2733	USA	W	1
Rk	Bo	SNo	Name	Rtg	FED	Col	Res.

FIDE WOMEN'S GRAND SWISS 2025 SEP 3, 2025 – SEP 16, 2025

Overall Standings

Rk	SNo	Name	Rtg	Pts	TB1	TB2	TB3
1		GM Giri, Vaishali, Rameshbabu	2452	8	2434	66.5	71.5
2		GM Lagno, Kateryna	2505	8	2433	65.5	70
3		GM Assaubayeva, Bibisara	2505	7.5	2425	65.5	70
4		GM Tan, Zhongyi	2531	7.5	2423	61	64
5		IM Song, Yuxin	2409	7.5	2411	63.5	67
6		IM Fataliyeva, Ulviyya	2385	7	2461	69	74.5
7		GM Krush, Irina	2366	7	2419	58.5	63
8		GM Muzychuk, Mariya	2484	7	2404	58	62
9		IM Guo, Qi	2371	6.5	2436	64.5	69
10		GM Girya, Olga	2386	6.5	2430	64.5	68.5

GM VAISHALI, RAMESHBABU | Starting rank 13 | Rating 2452 | Federation IND

Rk	Bo	SNo	Name	Rtg	FED	Col	Res.
1	13	41	IM Tokhirjonova, Gulrukhbegim	2372	UZB	W	1
2	2	39	IM Roebers, Eline	2377	NED	B	1
3	1	40	IM Badelka, Olga	2375	AUT	W	1
4	1	26	IM Wagner, Dinara	2400	GER	B	0.5
5	1	4	GM Lagno, Kateryna	2505	FID	W	0.5
6	2	33	IM Fataliyeva, Ulviyya	2385	AZE	B	1
7	2	42	IM Guo, Qi	2371	CHN	W	1
8	1	3	GM Assaubayeva, Bibisara	2505	KAZ	B	0
9	2	21	IM Song, Yuxin	2409	CHN	W	0.5
10	3	6	GM Muzychuk, Mariya	2484	UKR	W	1
11	1	2	GM Tan, Zhongyi	2531	CHN	B	0.5
Rk	Bo	SNo	Name	Rtg	FED	Col	Res.

GM LAGNO, KATERYNA | Starting rank 4 | Rating 2505 | Federation FID

Rk	Bo	SNo	Name	Rtg	FED	Col	Res.
1	4	32	IM Salimova, Nurgul	2386	NUL	B	0.5
2	8	52	WIM Omonova, Umida	2252	UZB	W	1
3	3	34	WGM Balabayeva, Xeniya	2383	KAZ	B	1
4	2	21	IM Song, Yuxin	2409	CHN	W	1
5	1	13	GM Vaishali, Rameshbabu	2452	IND	B	0.5
6	1	26	IM Wagner, Dinara	2400	GER	W	1
7	1	27	GM Stefanova, Antoaneta	2395	BUL	B	0.5
8	2	6	GM Muzychuk, Mariya	2484	UKR	W	1
9	1	3	GM Assaubayeva, Bibisara	2505	KAZ	W	0.5
10	1	2	GM Tan, Zhongyi	2531	CHN	B	0.5
11	2	33	IM Fataliyeva, Ulviyya	2385	AZE	W	0.5
Rk	Bo	SNo	Name	Rtg	FED	Col	Res.

WHO HAS QUALIFIED FOR THE 2026 CANDIDATES

The dust has mostly settled on next year's Candidates fields, though some spots remain up for grabs. The women's tournament has seven players locked in, with just the FIDE Women's Events winner to be determined. Assaubayeva sits pretty atop the Women's Circuit standings and looks set to claim that final berth - small consolation after her heartbreaking near-miss in Samarkand.

The open section stays messy, five spots still floating around the World Cup and other qualifying routes. Praggnanandhaa's Circuit dominance gives him a safety net despite his Grand Swiss flop, while others like Keymer and Abdusattorov must hunt for alternative paths.

FIDE CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT



Fabiano Caruana
2024 FIDE Circuit



2025 World Cup 1st



2025 World Cup 2nd



2025 World Cup 3rd



Anish Giri
2025 Grand Swiss 1st



Matthias Bluebaum
2025 Grand Swiss 2nd



2025 FIDE Circuit



By Rating

FIDE WOMEN'S CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT



Zhu Jiner
2024-25 WGP 1st



Aleksandra Goryachkina
2024-25 WGP 2nd



Divya Deshmukh
2025 Women's World Cup 1st



Humpy Koneru
2025 Women's World Cup 2nd



Tan Zhongyi
2025 Women's World Cup 3rd



Vaishali R
2025 Grand Swiss 1st



Kateryna Lagno
2025 Grand Swiss 2nd



FIDE Women's Events 2024-25
series 1st



FALL FROM GRACE: THE SHEVCHENKO AFFAIR

By BCM

Anyone following chess's recent battles with technology won't be shocked by what happened to Kirill Shevchenko. But the severity of his punishment - becoming only the fourth player ever stripped of a grandmaster title - sends a message that goes well beyond one Ukrainian's fall from grace.

The 22-year-old's case, which concluded with FIDE's Ethics and Disciplinary Commission rejecting his final appeal on 28 August this year, offers a window into chess's deepest modern challenge: how do you police a game built on trust when a smartphone can outplay Magnus Carlsen?

FROM HERO TO PARIAH

There's cruel irony in Shevchenko's story. Here was a player who embodied chess's most inspiring narratives - a teenage prodigy from war-torn Ukraine achieving his GM title at 14, representing his country at the European Team Championship, beating established stars like Fabiano Caruana in blitz tournaments. After switching to Romania in 2023, he remained a poster boy for chess's global appeal.

That image shattered in Melilla in October 2024, when Francisco Vallejo Pons grew suspicious of his opponent's bathroom breaks. What tournament arbiters discovered reads like something from a spy novel: mobile phone hidden in toilet facilities, complete with handwritten instructions for a mysterious "guest" - "Do not touch! The phone is left for a guest to answer at night." A day earlier, another phone was discovered by the cleaner, in the same place.

When confronted, Shevchenko's denials and defence collapsed faster than a miniature brilliancy, leading to his written confession about accessing the chess platform Lichess

mid-game: "I, Kirill Shevchenko, am writing to you regarding the case of cheating against Vallejo Pons on October 13th, where I am accused of using a mobile phone. With the deepest regret, I have to admit that I did this."

THE NUMBERS GAME

FIDE's punishment is telling when you examine the precedents. Shevchenko joins a list so exclusive (for all the wrong reasons) that you can count it on one hand: Igors Rausis (six-year ban in 2019), Gaoz Nigalidze (2015), and Alexandru Crisan (2015). That's it. Four players in chess history have been adjudged to be so far beyond redemption that they lost the sport's most prestigious title.

Of course, there have been many more similar accusations, including - most famously - the case of Hans Niemann.

Shevchenko's lawyers were seeking a 12-month reduction in the ban and 10,500 Swiss Francs in legal costs. However, the Appeals Chamber, led by Yolander Persaud, was not swayed by his legal team's arguments about "attempted" versus "completed" cheating, or claims of psychological pressure from death threats. FIDE's logic was stark: possessing an electronic device during play violates FIDE's ethics code, period. No distinctions, no excuses.

THE TECHNOLOGY PROBLEM

What makes the Shevchenko case particularly significant isn't just the punishment, but what it reveals about chess's technological predicament. Unlike traditional sports where performance-enhancing substances offer marginal but nonetheless significant performance gains, chess engines provide overwhelming advantage. Any smartphone can access analysis so strong that it would even embarrass world champions.

The available technology has now created an enforcement nightmare. How do you monitor hundreds of players across dozens of tournaments? Chess has traditionally operated on honour whereby players police themselves, arbiters handle disputes, and mutual trust prevails. That system worked well when cheating required elaborate preparation and obvious equipment. It's less effective when the most powerful chess computers in history fit in your pocket.

Deputy Chair of the FIDE Management Board, WGM Dana Reizniece, said in a statement about the case: "FIDE takes cheating cases among top players with the utmost seriousness. We are working hard on both prevention and swift, appropriate sanctions. Ensuring fair play is non-negotiable - it is essential to the credibility and future of our sport."

Reizniece's statement about "non-negotiable" fair play sounds robust, but the practical reality is more complex. FIDE can ban players, strip titles, and issue stern warnings, but preventing cheating requires resources, planning and a vigorous enforcement methodology. At the same time - the anti-cheating authorities in FIDE are also under pressure, as some think this job can and should be done by arbiters and not (as is the case now) by specially trained officials.

THE DETERRENT QUESTION

Whether harsh punishment actually deters cheating remains an open question in chess, just as it does in other sports. The cycling world's aggressive anti-doping measures have not eliminated performance enhancement - they have simply made it more sophisticated. Chess faces a similar arms race, except the "doping" is freely available technology.

Shevchenko's case might discourage crude attempts like hiding phones in toilets, but it doesn't address the more subtle forms of assistance. Players can memorize the very sophisticated analysis readily available nowadays from chess engines, which of course favours players with powerful memories. Vibrating devices could signal optimal moves. The technological possibilities are no doubt legion.

LOOKING FORWARD

The practical implications extend beyond individual punishment. Shevchenko can still teach chess privately - FIDE's jurisdiction has limits. But his competitive career may well be finished. In a sport where reputation matters enormously, losing a GM title for such a reason is probably not survivable.

For chess administrators, the case highlights uncomfortable realities about modern tournament security. Traditional measures - checking bags, confiscating phones - are inadequate against determined cheaters with technological resources.

The sport faces difficult choices. More aggressive security means higher costs, potentially alienating players and sponsors. Lighter enforcement risks competitive integrity. As other sports have found, there are no perfect solutions, only trade-offs between practicality and principle.

THE BROADER CONTEXT

Perhaps most troubling is what the Shevchenko affair reveals about chess's institutional health. This case is after all not just about one player's poor judgment - it shines a light on a sport struggling to adapt to digital realities while maintaining its essential character.

Chess has always prided itself on intellectual purity, on being a battle of minds uncontaminated by external factors. That ideal becomes harder to maintain when every player carries a device more powerful than Deep Blue. The game's romantic image of untarnished mental combat between human mind warriors increasingly collides with technological reality.

The question is not whether FIDE made the right decision about Shevchenko - his confession made the outcome plain to see and inevitable. The question is whether chess can evolve and adapt fast enough to preserve competitive integrity without destroying the essential trust between participants engaged in honest competition.

Shevchenko's three-year ban ends in 2026. By then, chess engines will be even stronger, and smartphones will no doubt be even more available and in use. The sport will need better answers than hoping players keep to the high road and resist temptation, otherwise it will be at serious risk of becoming just another moral casualty of the digital age.

THE MINDSPORTS INTERNATIONAL OPEN

A GREAT PERFORMANCE BY BRANDON CLARKE

By IM Shaun Taulbut

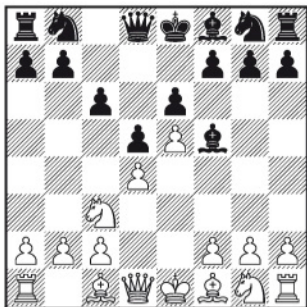
The Mindsports International Open featured several grandmasters and international masters. Igor Janik and Brandon Clarke finished first with 7/9; Janik winning the tiebreak.

Brandon Clarke made a grandmaster norm and we look at two of his games starting with the round eight win against The Caro Kann.

Brandon Clarke – Li Wenxiang

JV Mindsports Int Open London ENG (8.4)

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♘f5 4.♘c3 e6



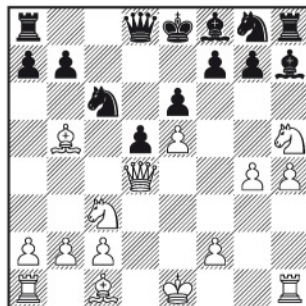
White now chooses an aggressive variation attacking the black bishop, a good choice when a win is needed.

5.g4 ♘g6 6.♘ge2 c5 7.h4 h5 The alternative is 7...cxd4 8.♘xd4 h5 with complex play.

8.♘f4 ♘h7 After 8...cxd4 9.♘xg6 fxg6 10.♙xd4 ♘c6 is satisfactory for Black,

but he prefers to keep the pawn structure undamaged and surrender the pawn on h5.

9.♘xh5 cxd4 10.♙xd4 ♘c6 11.♘b5



11...♘xc2 Perhaps not the best choice. Black should have played 11...♘ge7 12.♘g5 a6 13.♘xc6+ ♘xc6 14.♙f4 ♙a5 with counterplay.

12.♘g5 ♙a5 13.♖c1 ♘g6

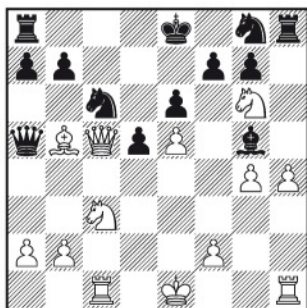


14.♘f4 ♘e7



This is slightly awkward for White because of the pin down the h-file, but he has a sharp line which puts pressure on Black.

15. ♖xg6 ♜xg5 16. ♔c5

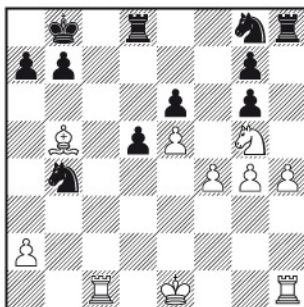


This threat of ♜xc6+ forces Black to castle queenside.

16... 0-0-0 17. b4 Also possible is 17. ♖xh8 ♜xc1 18. b4 with complications.

17... ♔xb4 Better is 17... ♔a3 18. ♜c2 ♜e7 (18... fxc6 19. ♜xc6 bxc6 20. ♔xc6+ ♔b8 21. ♔b5+ ♔a8 22. ♖xd5 exd5 23. ♜c7).

18. ♔xb4 ♖xb4 19. f4 fxg6 20. ♖e4+ ♔b8 21. ♖xg5



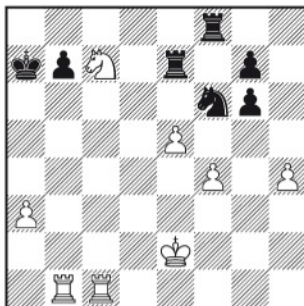
White has emerged with sounder pawns and Black cannot defend the pawn on e6. Black is temporarily a pawn up but his kingside is weak.

21... ♖h6 Best is 21... ♖xa2 22. ♜c5 b6 23. ♜c6 ♖e7 24. ♜xe6 when White has an edge.

22. a3 Also playable is 22. ♖xe6 ♜c8 23. ♔d2 ♖xg4 24. a3.

22... a6 23. ♜e2 ♖c6 24. ♖xe6 ♜de8 25. ♖c5 ♖d4 26. ♔b1 Also possible is 26. ♜d1 ♖xe2 27. ♔xe2 ♖xg4 28. ♜xd5 with strong play.

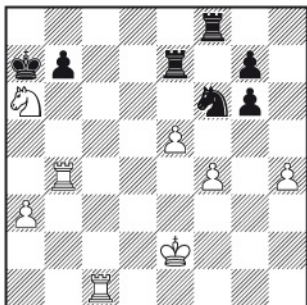
26... ♜e7 27. ♖xa6+ ♔a7 28. ♖b4 ♜f8 29. ♜f1 ♖xe2 30. ♔xe2 ♖xg4 31. ♖xd5 ♜e6 32. ♜fc1 ♖f6 33. ♖c7 ♜e7



White has a strong pawn on e5 but has to defend the supporting pawn on f4 but he is able to do this whilst attacking the black king.

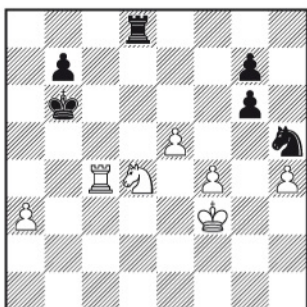
34.♖b4 Also possible is the tactical line
 34.♟f3 ♘h5 35.♞c4 ♞xe5 36.♞a4+
 ♜b8 37.♞c1 ♞xf4+ 38.♞xf4 ♘xf4
 39.♟xf4 ♞f5+ 40.♟g4 ♞a5 41.♞c3.

34...♜b8 35.♘a6+ ♔a7 36.♘c7 ♜b8
 37.♘a6+ ♔a7



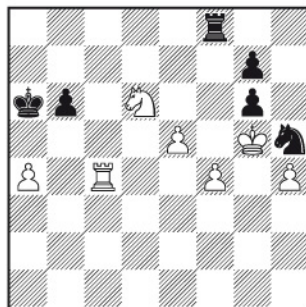
White now forces an exchange of rooks paving the way for his passed e-pawn to advance.

38.♞c7 ♞xc7 39.♘xc7 ♘h5 40.♟f3
 ♞d8 41.♘b5+ ♜b6 42.♘d4+ ♔a6
 43.♞a4+ ♜b6 44.♞b4+ ♔a6 45.♞c4
 ♜b6



After 45...b5 46.♞b4 ♞d5 47.a4 bxa4
 48.♞xa4+ ♜b6 49.♞c4 ♜b7 50.♟g4
 ♞a5 51.♟g5 ♞a1 52.♘e2 ♞e1 53.♞c2
 White has a winning advantage.

46.a4 ♞f8 47.♘b5 ♞a8 48.♟g4 ♞f8
 49.♘d6 ♔a6 50.♟g5 b6



Now White is ready to advance his passed pawn to win the game

51.e6 ♘f6 52.e7 ♞h8 53.♟xg6.

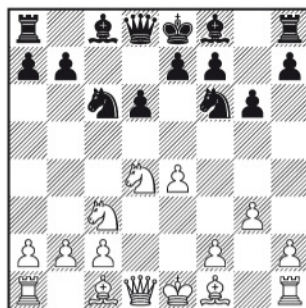
1-0

In the last round and needing a win for the GM norm Brandon Clarke beat Ukrainian GM Alexander Kovchan.

Alexander Kovchan – Brandon Clarke

V Mindsports Int Open London ENG (9.3)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
 5.♘c3 g6 6.g3 ♘c6

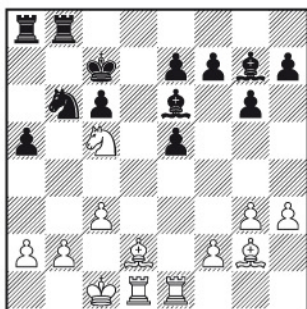


White now decides to sacrifice a pawn, but this leaves Black with a slight advantage.

7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.e5 dxe5 9.♞xd8+ ♔xd8
 10.♞g2 ♔c7 11.♞d2 ♟g7 12.h3 ♞e6

13.0-0-0 a5 14.♖he1 ♖d5 15.♗a4 Worth consideration is 15.f4 and if 15...exf4 16.♗xd5+ cxd5 17.♗xf4+ ♖c6 18.c4 with good play for White.

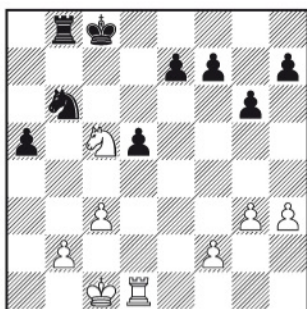
15...♖hb8 16.c3 ♗b6 17.♗c5



A mistake allowing Black an important queenside pawn.

17...♗xa2 18.♗f4 ♗d5 Not 18...exf4 19.♖xe7+ ♖c8 20.♖e8+ with a perpetual check.

19.♖xe5 ♗xe5 20.♗xe5+ ♖c8 21.♗xd5 cxd5 22.♗xb8 ♖xb8



Black has consolidated his extra pawn and can play against the White queenside.

23.f4 e6 24.♖d4 ♗c4 25.♗d3 If 25.b3 ♖b5 26.bxc4 ♖xc5 27.cxd5 ♖xc3+ 28.♗d2 ♖xg3 29.dxe6 fxe6 30.♖a4 ♖xh3 31.♖xa5 ♗d7 is winning.



Brandon Clarke

Source: www.brandonclarke.co.uk

25...♖c7 25...a4 is also good.

26.♗e5 ♗xb2 27.♗xf7 a4 28.♗g5 After 28.♖b1 ♗c4+ 29.♖a1 ♖b3 30.♖d3 ♗a3 31.♗e5 d4 32.♖a2 ♗b5 33.cxd4 ♗c3+ wins.

28...a3 29.♖b1 If 29.♗xe6+ ♗d6 30.♗g5 a2 wins.

29...♗a4+

0-1

V MINDSPORTS INT OPEN LONDON ENG WED 13TH AUG 2025 - MON 18TH AUG 2025

Leading Final Round 9 Standings:

Rk	SNo	Name	FED	Rtg	Pts	TB1
1	2	GM Janik, Igor	POL	2519	7	2626
2	4	IM Clarke, Brandon G I	ENG	2491	7	2596
3	1	GM Urkedal, Frode Olav Olsen	NOR	2558	6.5	2559
4	19	IM Lohia, Sohum	ENG	2387	6.5	2522
5	6	IM Csonka, Balazs	HUN	2467	6.5	2479
6	3	GM Beerdsen, Thomas	NED	2513	6.5	2465
7	12	IM Feuerstack, Aljoscha	GER	2449	6.5	2457
8	7	IM Levin, Guy	ISR	2464	6.5	2445
9	8	GM Hauge, Lars Oskar	NOR	2460	6.5	2441
10	9	IM Willow, Jonah B	ENG	2459	6.5	2403
11	14	IM Czopor, Maciej	POL	2434	6	2509
12	11	GM Kovchan, Alexander	UKR	2450	6	2438
13	75	Deepak Ambattu, Rithvik	SCO	1990	6	2421
14	28	FM Badacsonyi, Stanley	ENG	2309	6	2376
15	76	Kapechun, Mikhailo	UKR	1985	6	2319
16	25	WGM Radeva, Viktoria	BUL	2317	6	2275
17	13	IM Tica, Sven	CRO	2442	6	2272
18	10	IM Storme, Isak	SWE	2452	6	2245
19	17	Li, Wenxiang	CHN	2395	5.5	2314
20	15	IM Zhou, Yang-Fan	ENG	2406	5.5	2296
21	37	FM Badacsonyi, Frankie	ENG	2193	5.5	2275
22	16	IM Vandenbussche, Thibaut	BEL	2402	5.5	2273
23	90	Steiners, Emils	LAT	1933	5.5	2235
24	38	Zheng, Harry Z	ENG	2190	5.5	2226
25	32	WGM Antolak, Julia	POL	2280	5.5	2208
26	33	FM Kiremitciyan, Ari	TUR	2271	5.5	2183
27	36	Bin-Suhayl, Ileysaa	ITA	2217	5.5	2179
28	29	IM Fitzsimons, David	IRL	2308	5.5	2113
29	31	IM Bracker, Frank	GER	2301	5	2333
30	95	Pal, Rohan	ENG	1909	5	2310
31	22	FM Hobson, Kenneth	ENG	2361	5	2261
32	72	AIM Sanitt, Ethan	ENG	2033	5	2257
33	5	GM Gasanov, Eldar	UKR	2471	5	2234
34	30	FM San Emeterio Cabanes, Jose L.	ESP	2303	5	2226
35	64	Bharat Kumar, Balahari	ENG	2052	5	2206
36	26	FM Gombocz, Ferenc Jr.	HUN	2315	5	2203
37	18	IM Balaji, Aaravamudhan	ENG	2394	5	2201
38	51	CM Hoffman, Luc	USA	2123	5	2201
39	49	WFM Hng, Mei-En Emmanuelle	SGP	2132	5	2136
40	77	Vashisht-Pigem, Raman	ENG	1981	5	2218

THE WAIST LAND

A LITERARY CHALLENGE TO MY READERS

By Grandmaster Raymond Keene OBE

This month I set a literary challenge and offer a modest prize to the winner. Inspired by (though NOT in the style of) TS Eliot's *The Waste Land* I have written this column in the style of three famous authors from the rich and varied history of English literature.

I call it *The Waist Land*.

The challenge is: to identify by name each of the three famous authors I have referred to above who provide the inspiration for this column.

With a deadline of submission by November 30, 2025 direct to the email of the Editor of the BCM (editor@britishchessmagazine.co.uk), all correct answers (if any) will be subject to a ballot, and the winner will receive a signed copy of my latest book (co-written with my friend, artist Barry Martin) *Chess through the Looking Glass*. So please remember to include your postal address, when submitting your answers.

The Waist Land

I) Feasting with Grandmasters

Good news, they said. Chess people. Chess gourmets. Simpsons in the Strand. Mecca of chess. The Immortal Game. 1851. They say it will open again. This year. Five years shut. Virus. The doors closed. The tables empty. The roast beef uncarved.

A press release came. Full of words. I didn't read it all. Enough to know. The lights will come on again.

Food for thought. Thought for food. How do they feed themselves, these grandmasters?

These grey cells. Little grey cells. Not little enough. Not grey enough. Not cells enough. Long games. Long hours. Moves and more moves. I once said fish was the thing. Sea-things. Omega-3. DHA. EPA. Long words, longer still when the professor from London said them. I organised a tournament. Simpson's. Barry Martin. Nigel Short. He ate nothing but fish. Won the tournament. Cause and effect? Coincidence. Or not.

Others, meat. Kasparov. Steak. Rare. Before the game. Most men after such a slab would sleep. Drift. He didn't. He knew the openings too well. Autopilot. The meat would burn inside him, wake him in the middle game.

Carlsen eats vegetables sometimes. Lebanese, Chinese. Ascetic. They all are now. Not like before. Then there was drink. Smoke. Food enough to drown a bishop.

Georgia, 1974. Banquets. Three of them. In the middle of a tournament. Caviar. Blinis. Brandy. Vodka. A man at the table making toasts. You had to drink. Then drink again. Cure: dig a hole. Lie over it. Belly in the hole. Promise never again. Until next time.

Third banquet. Out on the street. Me and Guðmundur Sigurjónsson. No taxis. A green light. A peaked hat. I hailed it. He tugged my arm. Don't, he said. We got in. A cage. A siren. Not a taxi. Police.

China. Banquets. Nineteen courses. Ducks. Scorpions. Fish carved like dragons. Drink like rocket fuel. We laughed.

England in the Middle Ages. Forty deer. A thousand chickens. No chess. Bishops, yes. London 1883. Zukertort won. Banquet

menu in French. I translated it. Nobody listened. Toast to the best chess player. Two men stood up. Both of them.

Simpson's-in-the-Strand. Nigel Short on lobster, oysters, sole. Roast lamb, roast beef, silver trolleys. Nineteenth century, it was the greatest chess club. Smoke, coffee. The board at the top of the stairs. Staunton. Anderssen. Morphy. Lasker. My name there too.

The Immortal Game. Anderssen. 1851. They ran down the Strand with the moves. To Paris. Café de la Régence. Gone now. Nimzowitsch saw the game as a boy. It ruined him for anything else.

Conan Doyle came. Gave Holmes "something nutritious" here. Maybe he saw Steinitz. Stole his beard, his forehead, his shape, gave them to Professor Challenger. Steinitz is dead. Conan Doyle is dead. Simpsons is still here. For now.

Our first game this month pits two denizens of Simpsons against each other, from that establishment's glory days as the Mecca of world chess. Indeed, Elijah Williams was not a mere denizen, more the Homeric Bard of Simpsons, singing the praises of its chessboard heroes in his book, *Horae Divanianae*, a collection of the best chessboard battles played at Simpsons Divan.

Howard Staunton vs. Elijah Williams

8th match game, London, July 1851

1.f4 e6 2.e3 f5 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 d5 5.♘f3 c5 6.b3 ♘c6 7.O-O ♗d6 8.♗b2 O-O 9.♖e2 ♗c7 10.♘a3 a6 11.♞ad1 b5 12.c4 bxc4 13.bxc4 ♗b8 14.♗xf6 ♖xf6 15.cxd5 exd5 16.d4 c4?

Had Black a remnant pawn on f7, this move may have been feasible, but his white squares are screaming for a sacrifice by White. Black needed to instead play either, 16...♗d6 17.dxc5 ♖xc5 18.♘c2 ♗b2, or 16... cxd4 17.exd4 ♗d7 18.♘e5 ♖e6, with near-equality.



17.♘e5 ♘b4 18.♘axc4! as per last comment.

18...dxc4? It was more important to contest the a2-g8 diagonal than recapture the pawn, for example, 18...♖e6 19.a3 dxc4 20.axb4 ♖xb4 21.♘c6 ♗b5 22.♖c1 ♗d6, still worse but no worse.

19.a3? Reprehensively premature. While the absence of squares for this knight is evident, there was no rush to expose this fact. After, 19.♖xc4+ ♖f7 (even worse is, 19...♗e6 20.d5 ♖fc8 21.dxe6 ♗xe5 22.fxe5 ♖xe5 23.♖f4 ♖xf4 24.♖xf4 g6 25. e4) 20.♗b1 a5 21.♘xf7 ♖xf7 22.♖xf7+ ♗xf7 23.♖fc1 ♗d6 24.a3 ♗e6 25.axb4 axb4 26.♖c6, leaves White with a monstrous advantage.

19...♗xe5 20.dxe5? White wishes to reduce his number of pawn islands and open the d-file for his rook, but it is less progressive than, for example, 20.fxe5 ♖e6 21.axb4 ♖e8 22.♖f3 ♖xb4 23.♖d5 ♖f7 24.♖c5 ♗b5 25.♗d6 ♖e7 26.♗d5+ ♗e6 27.♖xe7 ♖xe7, giving White a substantial lead. After the text, Black has almost regained equality.



20...♖f7 21.axb4 ♖xb4 22.♖d6 ♗b7?!

This is too slow and suffers under the misapprehension that Black can dispute the white squares confrontationally. Better advised is, 22...♗e6 23. g4 ♗h8 24.gxf5 ♗xf5 25.e4 ♗g6 26.f5 ♖a7+ 27.♗h1 ♗e8, when the status quo is maintained.

23.e6 ♖c7? A serious miscalculation. Black restrains his opponent best with, 23...♖e8 24.♗xb7 ♖xb7 25.♖xc4 ♖b5 26.♖a2 ♖e8, when Black retains some control over the white squares. White needs no second invitation, and smoothly presses home his advantage.



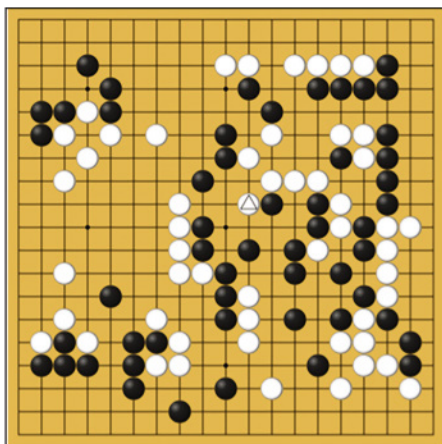
24.♖d7 ♖c8 25.♖d1 ♗c6 26.♗xc6 ♖xc6 27.♖d4 ♖f6 28.♖d6 ♖b5 29.♖d8+ ♖f8?? leaving White a forced mate in six.

30.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 31.♖d6+ ♗e8 32.♖d1 Black resigns because 32...♖d5 (32...♖a5 33.♖d7+ ♗f8 34.♖f7#) 33.♖xd5 ♗e7 34.♖d7+ ♗f6 35.♖f7# inescapably follows.

1-0

II) A Game of Go

adjourned position as the bomb dropped



Hashimoto vs. Iwamoto (game 2)

In that grievous season, when the world, long rent and riven by the furious strife of nations, marked the first and dread unveiling of the atomic fire, whose consuming breath laid low the city of Hiroshima, there befell a circumstance both strange and solemn, wherein the mind of man, drawn to the serene yet perilous contest of the game of Go, did fashion for itself, amidst ruin and desolation, a separate sphere untouched by war's immediate hand.

Go — that venerable trial of intellect, wherein two adversaries, Black and White, in alternate turn set their unchanging stones upon the intersections of the board's measured lattice — seek not the sudden overthrow of a sovereign piece, as in the play of chess, but the slow and certain mastery of territory, the quiet encircling of space hard-won by foresight and patient siege. This noble exercise, long cherished in the islands of the East, was to the West commended by the hand of Yasunari Kawabata, poet of prose and laureate of his land, whose life, shadowed by grief for his friend Mishima, was ended by his own choosing.

Yet in those years of the great war, the boards of Go lay often idle; for the young and the strong were drawn into the maw of battle, and the papers that once bore record of each move and counter-move were narrowed by famine of supplies, their columns pruned, the voice of the game muted. Still, through want and danger, there remained a remnant faithful to its cause, and tournaments were yet contrived, though the record thereof might never meet the public eye.

In the spring of that fateful year, Kaoru Iwamoto, master of seven dan, by the merit of his skill, won the right to contend with Hashimoto Utau for the third Honinbo crown. Yet Tokyo, scarred and shattered, yielded no place fit for such a match, and so the quest for a board untroubled by the enemy's fire led them to Hiroshima. But there the chief of police, himself a lover of the game, forbade them, warning of peril. Nevertheless, when his duty called him hence, the players, seizing the moment, set stones in earnest upon the twenty-third day of July, and for three days contended, while from above the iron birds of war rained down their bullets in vain to disturb the working of their minds.

Returning, the chief rebuked them sternly and renewed his prohibition; and so they removed to Itsukaichi, where, from the fourth to the sixth day of August, the second game was played. Yet on the morning of that last day, as Hashimoto took the air in the garden, the firmament was rent by a light beyond the noonday sun, and a cloud, vast and monstrous, rose in the likeness of a titan's canopy; then came a wind like the breath of an unchained tempest, shattering the windows, casting the stones from their order. Yet the players, undaunted, restored the board, and beneath the very shadow of apocalypse concluded their match, Hashimoto prevailing by five points.

But at eventide the roads were filled with the wounded and the maimed, and the horror of

what had been wrought entered their hearts. The house where once they were to have played was ash and ruin, its master slain. A week thence, the war itself lay in the dust, and in the cold month of November the match resumed; and when six games were played, the score stood even, so that another trial was needed. Yet so deep was the confusion of the land that until July of the following year no such contest could be arranged; but then Iwamoto, by two swift victories, claimed the crown.

Long after, both men stood as pillars of the game in the new peace. Hashimoto in time regained the Honinbo and, exalting in his title, sundered himself from the ancient association to found the Western Japan Go Association, which for a time contended bitterly with its elder, until the heat of rivalry cooled and both labored together for the cause. Iwamoto, who yet lived to the winter of his ninety-seventh year, journeyed far beyond his homeland, planting the seeds of Go in the cities of the West — in Amsterdam, in São Paulo, in Seattle, and in New York — that the wisdom and beauty of this ancient contest might not perish from the earth.

Thus in the day of ruin and the dawn of peace alike, the stones were set, and the game endured.

III) The Methuselah Mandate

In Liverpool, that city of music and mermaids, where the wind off the Mersey still tastes faintly of salt and shipwreck, the 2025 British Championship became, last month, a duel between two knights of the grey-templed order, and in the end the laurels, laurel leaves with perhaps a faint whiff of mothballs, went to the younger of the ancients, the positively boyish fifty-three-year-old Mickey Adams, who, like some cunning spider-god from a half-forgotten folktale, spun and spun until his opponents found themselves entangled without knowing when the first strand had touched their skin.

It came down to Adams and another champion from the kingdom of yesteryear, Grandmaster Stuart Conquest, fifty-eight, whose name always suggested banners and heralds and the triumphant trumpet, but whose path to this final field had been a patient business of seeing off the boys — boys in chess years, though some of them were in the middle of university or careers or the first grey hair — until the bracket narrowed to this duel of elder blades. The match, a best-of-two to crown the monarch, was as brief and brutal as a thunderclap; Adams, the “younger” old man, devoured the “older” old man, 2-0, leaving the rest of the field looking a little like survivors from a shipwreck wondering how on earth these veteran corsairs had sailed straight through them.

Adams plays with silk threads. Not the war-drums of Kasparov, Napoleon thundering his armies down the enemy’s throat, but the needlework of King Louis XI, the Universal Spider himself, weaving soft traps that are somehow made of steel, smiling all the while. Conquest’s style — well, that’s another tapestry. But against Britain’s freshly minted prodigy, fifteen-year-old Grandmaster Shreyas Royal, neither man stitched nor stormed; they simply struck, and the boy was flattened twice in the same week, though perhaps in some secret place inside him he was pleased to be destroyed by such hands.

Here, a pause for a medical aside: Alzheimer’s. The slow moth that eats the fabric of memory. It has — marvellously, miraculously — spared the annals of chess. Or so says Leontxo García Olasagasti, Spanish journalist, International Master, and learned authority on that disease which steals the self. A scourge, yes — forty-six point eight million afflicted worldwide in 2015, billions of pounds flowing annually into the abyss — and yet somehow, among chess champions, it has not left a mark. And so arises the tantalising question: does chess itself, that endless brain-gymnastics, confer some protection? The doctors Lillo-Crespo,

Forner-Ruiz, Riquelme-Galindo, Ruiz-Fernández and García-Sanjuan, in their scholarly conjuring of 2019, say perhaps yes: the sixty-four-square citadel might just be a fortress against forgetfulness.

Look at Lasker, king for twenty-seven years, still dispatching the young Euwe in his mid-sixties; Smyslov, who in 1984 faced Kasparov at sixty-three, his eyes still tuned to the music of bishops and pawns; Korchnoi, the great contrarian, defeating Fabiano Caruana — a boy who could have been his great-grandson — in 2011.

Chess, played lazily in a café, is a pastime; played at the summit, it is war by other means, a sport recognised by the world (except, characteristically, by the United Kingdom, which prefers its sports to be measured in yards or pints).

And then my own confession: against Conquest, my personal ledger shows a deficit, a minus one, and that in a life that has faced — and, I may add without false modesty, beaten — champions by the handful. Golombek, Haygarth, Hodgson, Fazekas, Watson — draws; Klein, Wade, Yanofsky, Barden, Penrose, Nunn, Lee, Eley, Hartston, Botterill, Mestel, Speelman, Bellin, Littlewood, Miles, Basman — all pluses. But against Conquest, no; the ledger is written in red ink. He has, with gentlemanly malice, offered to erase the blot by counting a simultaneous victory in my tally, but for the sake of statistical purity (and perhaps the drama of the loss), I decline.

Basman, ah Basman — six months co-champion in 1973 while the Federation dallied over a playoff, six months the crown sat upon his head whether they liked it or not. The record keepers pretended otherwise; I refuse to join them. In my column, Basman remains what he was.

And so, to the games: Royal the Young, vanquished by Adams the Spider and Conquest the Conqueror, the stories of age

and youth crossing on the 64-square stage, in Liverpool, in the year the old men won.

Michael Adams vs. Shreyas Royal

British Championship, Liverpool, 2025, rd. 5

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.♙e2 The ever-enterprising Adams takes Royal off the beaten path.

3...♘c6 4.O-O ♘f6 5.♘c3 d5 6.exd5 exd5 7.d4 ♙e6 8.♙g5 h6 9.♙h4 cxd4? This novel move is natural, but a mistake. Black does best to complete his development with 9...♙e7. The text move activates the centre before Black has had an opportunity to castle.



10.♘xd4 ♙e7? Having opened the centre, this move is no longer adequate. Black has options that at least hold the status quo. Either, a) 10...♙c5 11.♘xe6 fxe6 12.♙h5+ ♖f8;

or, b) 10...♘xd4 11.♙xd4 ♙e7 12.♙b5+ ♖f8 13.♙ad1 ♙b6 14.♙xb6 axb6, retain a foothold.

11.♘xe6 fxe6 12.♙h5+?! White relaxes too soon - this move is premature. After 12.♙xf6! ♙xf6 13.♙h5+! whether Black continues with, a) 13...♖d7 14.♙e1 ♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♙f8 16.♙g4;

Or b) 13...g6 14.♙xg6+ ♖d7 15.♙e1 ♙xc3 16.bxc3 ♙f6 17.♙h5; White increases his advantage significantly.

12...♖f8? Black lets White off the hook with a premature move of his own. Necessary first, was the exchange, 12...♘xh5! 13.♙xh5+, and only now, 13...♖f8, when he is worse, but the equilibrium remains within bounds.

13.♙xf6 ♙xf6 14.♙e1 ♙e5 15.♙g4 ♙g5 16.♙h3 ♖e7?!



The king heads for the centre when it should seek refuge on the flank. After, 16...♖g8 17.♙xe6+ ♖h7 18.♙g4 ♙xg4 19.♙xg4 ♙he8 20.♖f1 ♙xc3 21.♙xe8 ♙xe8 22.bxc3 ♖g6, Black has at least equalised down to an endgame with some compensation.

17.♙g4 ♘d4 18.♙ad1? This routine move is an error. Far stronger is 18.♙xe6 ♘xe6 19.♘xd5+ ♖f7 20.♙f3+ ♘f4 21.g3, when White is already close to winning. But even after the text, White is much better.

18...♙ad8 19.g3 h5 20.♙xe6 ♘f3+ 21.♖f1 ♘xe1 22.♘xd5+ ♖f8?



A serious mistake. Black does best to restrict White with, 22...♖xd5 23.♖xd5 ♘xc2 24.f4 ♖g6 25.♗d7+ ♕f8 26.fxe5 ♘e3+ 27.♕e2 ♖e4 28.♖f7+ ♕e8 29.♗d7+ ♕d8 (but not 29...♕xf7?? 30.♖e6+ ♕f8 31.♖e8♯) 30.♖h4+ ♖xh4 31.gxh4 ♘g4, when Black is no worse off.

23.♖xe1 ♗xb2 24.♖g2 h4 25.♖e4 a5??

The game was gone, but this move nailed it shut. Black should prefer, 25...♗d6 26.♘f4 ♗h6 27.♗c4 ♗e5 28.♖xb7 ♖e7, when the slippery downward slope is less steep.

26.♘f4 ♗h6 27.♖xb7 ♖f6 28.♘d5 ♖xe6 29.♖xe6 ♖xe6 30.♘f4 Black resigns.

1-0

Stuart Conquest vs. Shreyas Royal

British Championship, Liverpool, 2025, rd. 8

1.b3 ♘f6 2.♗b2 c5 3.e3 d5 4.♘f3 e6 5.d4 ♘c6 6.♘bd2 ♗d6 7.♗d3 O-O The opening has transposed into a line favoured by the nineteenth century world champion aspirant, Johannes Zukertort.

8.O-O b6 9.a3 ♗b7 10.♘e5 ♖c8 11.f4 ♘e7 12.♖f3 b5 13.dxc5 ♗xc5 14.b4 ♗b6 15.♘b3 ♘e4 16.♘d4 ♘f5 17.♖ad1 ♖e7 Only now do we deviate from theory, with the teenager varying from 17...♘xd4, played in Halkias-Balogh, 2017, Greek Team Champ. Black is marginally better.



18.♗h1 a6 19.♖h3 ♘fd6 20.f5 f6? Black had the ascendancy up until this blunder. While the text stops White playing f6, it undermines the support of the e6-square.

21.♘g6 hxg6?? This second successive blunder terminally compounds Black's position. The capture is *verboden* as Black must cede material, not grab it! Both 21...♖f7 and ...♖e8 lose the exchange, but salvage some hope. For example, after 21...♖f7 22.♘xf8 e5 23.♘fe6 exd4 24.♗xd4, Black's material disparity is tolerable in the closed position.



After the chosen move, the former champion gives short shrift to his young opponent.

22.fxg6 ♘g5 23.♖h5 ♖fd8 24.♘f3 ♘gf7 25.gxf7+ ♘xf7 26.♖h7+ ♕f8 27.♘h4 ♕e8 28.♘g6 Black resigns.

1-0

PROBLEM WORLD

by Christopher Jones

cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk

Grandmaster of Chess Composition

Solutions are given on page 638



Leonid Lyubashevsky and Leonid Makaronez (Israel)

Mate in 3

ORIGINAL



Steven B. Dowd (USA)

Selfmate in 6

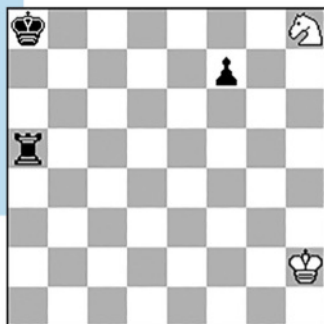
ORIGINAL



Abdelaziz Onkoud (France)

Helpmate in 2 - 2 solutions

ORIGINAL



Krzysztof Drazkowski (Poland)

Helpmate in 8.5

ORIGINAL

QUOTES AND QUERIES



AMATEUR INNOVATIONS THAT SHAPED CHESS

By Alan Smith

The chess history books are filled with the innovations of world champions and grandmasters, but some of the game's most intriguing ideas have emerged from the minds of dedicated amateurs.

The champions and masters are usually awarded the credit for innovations in chess. Here are the stories of some amateurs who have made a contribution or played a game which is in danger of being forgotten. This month's featured openings are the Gledhill Attack, the unfashionable 3...Bc5 in the Spanish and two very different treatments of 1.b4.

6307 The Walter Gledhill (1854- 1917) was a Yorkshire amateur who first analysed the line 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.Q♖4 which is named after him. Originally, he analysed 5...c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3, but later turned his attention to 5...c5 6.♘b5. That line still causes problems as is well demonstrated by this 2010 game.

**Dmitry Andreikin –
Alexander Khantuev**

Chigorin Memorial, St Petersburg 2010

1.e4 e6 2.♘c3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.Qg4!? c5 6.♘b5 Introduced by Gledhill in a 1909 postal game.

6...cxd4 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.♗f4 Improving on 8.♘d6+, which led nowhere in Bogoljubow - Reti Mahrisch Ostrau 1923.

8...a6 8...♖a5+ can be met by 9.♗d1! which is an alternative to 9.♗d2 ♖b6 10.♘d6+;

8...♗b4+ was played in Gledhill- Dr Smith 1909 white's best is probably 9.c3.

9.♘bxd4 ♘c5 10.♗d3 ♗d7 10...♘xd3+ 11.cxd3 ♘b4 goes nowhere after 12.♗e2! while 10...♘b4 can be met by 11.♗e2.

11.0-0 ♖b6 12.♘b3 ♘xd3 13.cxd3 ♘b4 14.♙e3 ♖b5 15.♙fc1 h5 16.♖g5 ♖xd3 17.♘c5 ♖h7 17...♖g6 is best answered by 18.♖xg6 fxg6 19.♘xb7.

18.♖h4 ♙xc5 19.♙xc5 ♘c6 20.♙d6 ♖e4 21.♖g5 ♖g6 22.♖e3 d4 22...0-0-0? loses on the spot to 23.♖a7!

23.♘xd4 ♘xd4 24.♖xd4 ♙c6 25.♙xc6! Of course!

25...bxc6 26.♖b6 ♙d8 27.♖xc6+ ♙d7 28.♙d1 ♖g5 29.♙c7 29...♖e7 30.♖a8+ ♖d8 31.♖xd8+.

Chess games website

The Gledhill Attack proved too strong for Janowski in a 1917 postal game and for Flohr in a match game versus Stoltz in 1931.

6308 While pursuing my research, I came across an online article (Streatham and Brixton Chess blog, 6th December 2014) about Ernest Montgomery Jellie (1866 - 1949). Some nice photographs and the odd game score were included, but the following brilliancy was not.

Lazar Estrin - Ernest Montgomery Jellie

Hampstead Chess Club championship, 1916

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♙c5 4.0-0 d6 5.c3 ♙b6 6.d4 exd4 7.cxd4 ♙d7 8.♘c3 John Nunn reckons white has a clear advantage.

8...♘f6 8...♘ge7 is also playable.

9.♙g5 h6 10.♙h4 g5 11.♘xg5? A thematic sacrifice. The alternative 11.♙g3 can be met by 11...♘h5.

11...hxg5 12.♙xg5 ♙g8 13.h4 ♙xd4! 14.♙xc6 ♙xc3 15.♙xd7+ This solves all black's problems for him. 15.bxc3 ♙xc6 16.♖d4 ♙xc5!? 17.hxg5 ♘d7! is unclear.

15...♖xd7 16.bxc3 ♘h7 Black has returned his extra piece to break the pin on his knight.

17.♙f4 0-0-0 18.♙b1 ♙g4 19.♖b3 b6 20.g3? 20.♙g3 ♙xe4 was correct.

20...♙xf4! 21.♘h2 White cannot accept the sacrifice 21.gxf4 ♖g4+ 22.♘h2 ♖xh4+ 23.♘g2 ♖g4+ 24.♘h2 ♖xf4+ 25.♘g2 ♖g4+ 26.♘h2 ♘g5.

21...♘g5!

0-1

1-0 *Melbourne Leader*, 1st September 1917

Black's win was awarded the prize for the best game published in the *Westminster Gazette* for 1916. Ernest Jellie also made the best score in the London League in the 1912-1913 season. He played on board 13 for Hampstead and won all thirteen games. This game was included in the 1996 publication, *Anthology of Chess Beauty*.

6309 The following game caught my eye, connoisseurs of hypermodern chess will note that it was played in 1908. The winner was a Dutch international at the age of 21.

Henry Baudet - Hans Hartung

Netherlands, 1908

1.b4 Nothing new here. Rev Skipworth and Delmar had both tried this with success.

1...e5 2.♙b2 ♖e7 Clumsy, but not bad.

3.a3 a5 4.c3 axb4? This is daft. Black should continue developing with ...♘f6 ...g6 ...♙g7, leaving white to figure out how to untangle his queen's side.

5.axb4 ♙xa1 6.♙xa1 b5 Black's next few moves concentrate on preventing white's c3-c4 break.

7.♖a3 c6 8.♗b3 d5 9.g3 f5 10.♘c2 ♜f6
11.♙g2 g6 12.♚f3 ♙g7 13.0-0 0-0
14.d3 ♜h8 15.c4! dxc4 16.dxc4 ♙e6
17.♜xe5 bxc4 18.♗e3 ♜e4 Unfortunately
18...♙d5?? loses to 19.♜xg6+.

19.♙xe4 fxe4 20.♗xe4 ♗e8 21.♜xc4
♙xa1 22.♚xa1 ♗f7 23.♗d4+ ♜g8
24.♚a7 c5 25.♚xf7 cxd4 26.♚xf8+ ♜xf8
27.♜e5 Black is losing a third pawn.

1-0

de Maasbode, 26th April 1908

6310 There is not so much of the hypermodern in the next game, white's 11th move must have come as a bit of a shock.

Porzig – Schiffer

Correspondence, 1960

1.b4 e5 2.♙b2 f6 3.e4 ♙xb4 4.♙c4 ♜e7
5.f4 d5 6.exd5 ♙d6 6...exf4 Tartakower -
Colle Bardejov 1926.

7.fxe5 fxe5 8.♗h5+ g6? 8...♜g6 was
correct 9.♚f3 ♜d7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♜c3 Rf4
Tartakower - Reti match game Vienna 1919.

9.♗e2 0-0 10.♜f3 ♙g4 11.♗xe5!! Wow!

11...♙xe5 12.d6+ ♜g7 13.♜xe5 ♜h6
13...♗xd6 was better.

14.♜xg4+ ♜g5 15.dxe7 ♗xe7+ 16.♜e3
Three minor pieces are good value for the queen.

16...♜d7 17.h4+ ♜h6 18.g4 g5 19.hxg5+
♜xg5 19...♜g6 20.♙d3+ ♜f7 21.♚h7+.

20.♚h5+ ♜f4 21.♜c3 c6 22.♜e2+
22...♜f3 23.♚h3+ ♜e4 24.♙d3#.

1 - 0

Het Parool, 8th April 1961

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Endgame Studies

by Ian Watson

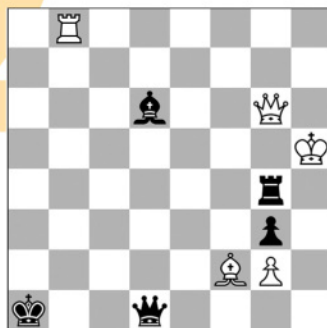
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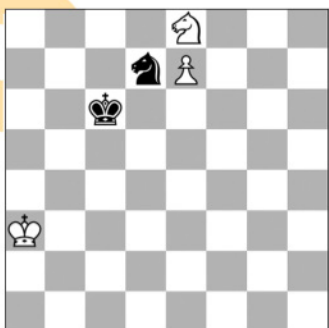
DRAW



M. Minski

Sahmat Bestesciliyi-15 JT 2018

DRAW



V Samilo

Phenix 2018

WIN



A Avni

Z Birnov MT 2013

DRAW

THE WORLD CHESS COMPOSITION TOURNAMENT (WCCT)

That's the acronym for the World Chess Composition Tournament. Last month, in this column, we looked at prizewinning studies from the World Championship in Composing for Individuals; this month, we look at the endgame study theme of the team Championship, the WCCT. The twelfth WCCT has just started, and entries can be submitted any time up to the end of June 2026. There are separate sections for all the major types of chess composition, including, of course, endgame studies. This is your opportunity to compose a study and enter it in a World Championship. The event is for national teams, so, if you are UK-based, then your study will be competing as one of the British team's entries.

The WCCT is a theme event, meaning that there is a theme that the compositions must comply with; for the study section, the theme is about White and Black sacrifices. To quote the official announcement: "A white sacrifice appears in a try, and it is refuted by a black sacrifice, instead of accepting the sacrifice. Therefore, White does something else, and instead of the failed try, White sacrifices the same piece - either immediately on a different square, or later on the same or a different square." That's a bit of a mouthful, as are the additional explanations in the official document, but this is a World Championship and so it has to be very exactly stated.

Our four studies this month are examples that are given in the official announcement to help composers understand the description of the theme. They are previously published studies that happened to feature the WCCT theme. Three of the four diagrams I am showing you are the later stages of the studies, the stages that display the theme. When you are solving them, you will need not only to find the solution, but also find the try, because the try is an integral part of the WCCT theme.

If you would like to enter the WCCT, let me know and I'll tell you how to submit your entry, but please don't send me your study because I'm one of the judges and the entries need to be anonymised before judging takes place. You can find full details of the event on the WFCC website at www.wfcc.ch/competitions/composing/12-wcct/

The answers are on page 639.

SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

This month's originals

I think that this may prove to be a difficult set of problems to solve, but in any event the quality is such that it will be well worth reading through the solutions to enjoy the skill of the composers (amongst whom we welcome Krzysztof Drazkowski to this column). Remember that in *selfmates* White must force an unwilling Black to mate White; while in *helpmates* White and Black collaborate to enable Black to be mated in the stipulated number of moves. Thus in Abdelaziz's problem you are looking for two bwbw sequences of moves that do the trick while in Krzysztof's you are looking for one sequence, in this case starting with a move by White, in which the seventeenth (!) 'half-move' mates Black.

Battery play...

...is a feature of our first problem. The line-up of the rook on g3 and bishop on h2 is likely to play an essential part in Black's downfall, but seasoned solvers will know better than to expect anything as crude as a move by that rook, giving check, on move one. Instead, the key is a sacrificial move by the other rook: 1.♖c3!. The threat is a further sacrificial offering: 2.♖cf3+ exf3 3.♗d4#. There are three defences. One, naturally, is acceptance of White's sacrifice: 1...bxc3. Just like 2...exf3 in the threat, this opens a line for the white queen, this time the b-file, and so we have 1...♗b8+ e5 2.dxe6#. (Captures e.p. are a perennial favourite of composers!) A second defence is 1...♗e5+. Now White's battery must fire - 2.♖xg5+; if 2...♗f6 3.♗h7# and if 2...♗d4 3.♗xb4#. Finally, Black can play 1...e5; but, with the potential flight square at e5 now blocked, White's response (a new combination of motifs seen in the foregoing lines of play) is 2.♗xb4!, for there is now no defence against 3.♖cf3#.

"Cage-building"...

... is referred to by Steven as the first phase of the solution of his selfmate. We have to construct a mating net around the white king, and as Black must be *compelled* to 'play ball' complete accuracy is required in this process. Complete accuracy, too, in the choice of destination square for the white knight on move one, even though he

will be returning to b4 later in the solution - 1.♗a6!. Thereafter, the play unfolds as follows: 1...d5 2.♖c5 c6 3.♗c2+ ♖a2 4.♗b4+ ♖a3 5.♖a5+, and now there are two possibilities. If Black plays 5...♗a4+, then 6.♗c3+ forces 6...♗xc3#; while if 5...♗xb4 then 6.♗a4+ forces 6...♗xa4#.

Helpmates: the short and the long of it

It would be difficult to show two more completely contrasting helpmates than our last two problems! In two-solution two-movers such as Abdelaziz's we look for pithy play fully utilizing all the white officers, with 'orthogonal/diagonal transformation': that is, things that happen on orthogonal lines in one solution happen on diagonal ones in the other, and *vice versa*. Thus, we have 1.♗e1 (unpin) ♗f3 2.♗h2 ('hide-away') ♖h4# and 1.♗c3 (unpin) ♗f3 2.f5 (hide-away) ♖g5#. Helpmate composers generally abominate identical moves occurring in different solutions, but here the point of course is that although on the page "1...♗f3" appears twice, it's a different knight each time!

Finally, to Krzysztof's epic helpmate. You can bet that the pawn will promote ('Excelsior': the journey all the way from f7 to f1), but I think that only an experienced solver would work out all the details of the play. The remarkable thing about problems like this is the complete accuracy (verified by computer) of the

(See page 632)

play 1...♖g6 2.f5 ♘e7 3.f4 ♘d5 4.f3 ♖g3 5.f2 ♖f4 6.f1=♙ ♖e5 7.♙a6 ♖d6 8.♙b7 ♖c7 9.♙a7 ♘b6#. The black rook must wait until the final move to go to a7, and so the white knight must take up white's first three moves, travelling to d5 (where it provides a shield for 6...♖e5). It is a

wondrous thing that this play is unique! (Not, for instance, 2...♘f4?.) Studying the mechanism of such a problem as this, and why this precise move sequence works uniquely, can only enhance one's admiration for the composer's constructional technique.

SOLUTIONS TO ENDGAMES

(See page 636)

Didukh

Our diagram shows the position after the 6th move of Didukh's study.

7. ♖d3 ♖b2 8.♙c3 ♖b1 9.♙c2 ♖a1 10.♙b2 ♖xb2 11.♙e5 ♖xe5 12.♙g8+ and White will be stalemated.

The try is 7.♙a4? ♖f8 8.♙a8 ♖f5 9.♙e5 ♖h5+ wins.

Minski

1.♙b1+ ♖xb1 2.♖f6+ ♖b2 3.♖xb2+ ♖xb2 4.♙c5 ♖g6 5.♙d4+ ♖~ 6.♖xg6 draws.

The try is 1.♖b1+? ♖xb1 2.♙xb1+ ♖xb1 3.♙c5 ♖g6 and wins because the White king can't get to f1.

Samilo

Our diagram has the position after move five.

6.♙a2 with 6...♖c5 7.♘d6 ♘f6 8.♘e4+ wins, or 6...♖b6 7.♘c7 ♘f6 8.♘d5+ wins.

The try is 6.♖b4? ♘c5 7.♘c7 ♘a6+ draws.

Avni

Our diagram has the position after move four.

5.♖g8 ♖g5 6.♖g7 ♖xg1 7.♖e7+ ♖g5 8.♖f6 ♙xf6 stalemate.

The try is 5.♖c4+ ♖g4 6.♖f4 ♙e5 wins.



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